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MODERN ANTHOLOGIES  
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MODERN MEMOIRS

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# AN ANTHOLOGY OF MODERN MEMOIRS

*Edited by*  
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## INTRODUCTION

WE do not, as a rule, require much encouragement to begin talking about ourselves, and very many of us, at one time or another, have made up our minds to keep a diary, though we have very probably failed lamentably in maintaining our resolve. So also individuals have always existed who have been bent on exposing their most intimate thoughts and desires, or their most secret actions for the benefit of their fellow-men ; just as there have always existed individuals determined to justify their actions to posterity by fighting their battles over again on paper, and confounding their opponents—in print at any rate. Indeed, the impulse to furnish a narrative of the whole or part of one's life, or to preserve some record of the events associated with it, seems ingrained in human nature.

The forms in which these desires find expression are many and varied ; they depend to a certain extent upon the reasons which lead the narrators to display their life-story to an interested public. Self-glorification, confession, apology, justification, the love of reminiscence, these are only some of the motives which have led to the production of autobiographical masterpieces.

Not less than the willingness of writers thus to indulge in revelation or recrimination is the eagerness of their fellow-men to study their record.

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The desire for personal knowledge of the world's outstanding personalities, whether film stars, sportsmen, society leaders, statesmen, or even authors, is at present overwhelming. It is not enough to judge a person by his works, we must know also of his everyday life and everyday doings ; and in the case of writers, in spite of its obvious dangers, it seems wellnigh impossible to refrain from some attempt to deduce their lives from their works. We shall probably never cease to wonder how much of personal experience went to the making of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, or to what extent David Copperfield is really Charles Dickens, or Elizabeth Bennet Jane Austen.

Since all creative writing is in the nature of self-revelation, every novel must no doubt contain some element of autobiography ; but there is an obvious difference between these two forms of literature. The writer of fiction will pick and choose, will rearrange, combine, and disconnect, and will strengthen the high lights of his narrative in such ways as may best satisfy his aims as an artistic creator ; the autobiographer, on the other hand, should be absolutely sincere and truthful in his narrative.

It would seem as if the scales were weighted heavily on the side of the novel ; yet biographies and autobiographies always find their crowd of readers, and we are living to-day in a period in which they constitute a highly-favoured form of reading matter ; a period also in which the line of demarcation between fact and fancy in biography is wearing somewhat thin. And ever since the day when Mason set the fashion in his life of Gray, biographers have found the auto-

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biographical method most attractive, and have taken care to let their subjects tell their own story as much as possible by means of letters, diaries, and recorded conversations. The advantages of this form have always been apparent also to the novelists, and in a host of novels they have allowed their heroes to narrate the story of their lives and adventures in the first person singular.

But, however interesting the autobiography in all its varied forms may be, there will often lurk in the minds of readers the doubt whether, after all, most persons are actually those best fitted to write their own biographies. Few persons can claim to possess the gift of happy reminiscence, still fewer the literary skill required to make their narrative a work of art. There must be very few who could hope to produce so exquisite a combination of biography and autobiography as Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son*, or interest their readers in intimate sensuous and sentimental *Confessions* in the way in which Rousseau is able to do. The difficulties that beset the path of such a narrator are indeed manifold. Few persons can have the gift of true self-revelation ; must we take in strictest accuracy the account of his actions which Cæsar has left us in his *Commentaries*, or Bunyan's portrayal of himself, in his *Grace Abounding*, as the chief of sinners ?

Yet there is doubtless on the part of all auto-biographers a desire for that " naked, unblushing truth " which Gibbon considered the sole recommendation of his own personal narrative, though the narrators themselves may confess the difficulty of reaching such a standard. Marie Bash-

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Kirtseff, in her own revealing narrative, felt this need of absolute sincerity ; everything ought to be written "without any attempt at posing, *as if no one in the world would ever read it, yet written with the intention of being read.*" Darwin tried to write as if he were a dead man in another world looking back at his own life in this. Cowley found it a hard and nice subject for a man to write of himself, for it would grate his heart to say anything of disparagement, and the reader's ears to hear anything of praise from him. Dr. Johnson, too, clearly realized this danger. He felt "that all censure of a man's self is oblique praise, with all the invidiousness of self-praise and all the reproach of falsehood." But he realized also that the autobiographer possessed that "first qualification of a historian, the knowledge of the truth, and though it might plausibly be objected that his temptations to disguise it were equal to his opportunities of knowing it, yet as much impartiality might confidently be expected from one who related his own life as from one who related the life story of another."

Pilate's problem of what constitutes the truth no doubt arises here, and lends colour to the suggestion of Mr. Leslie Stephen, that, alone of all books, an autobiography may be more valuable in proportion to the amount of misrepresentation it contains. It is obvious that any one can recall the incidents of his past life with a greater degree of exactitude than he can recall his past emotions and feelings, or even his past opinions. Yet it is the latter which will always be of the greater interest. Hence those autobiographies which are intimate confessions of

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their writer's inmost feelings and thoughts, will always make the strongest appeal to readers. Such works as those of Rousseau, the greatest of all subjective autobiographers, Amiel, De Quincey, and St. Augustine, will ever be first favourites with readers ; who will, however, also gladly find a place for such a narrative of events as Cellini's self-revealing record of his varied career, or John Stuart Mill's sincere and unaffected account of his own busy life.

But, of necessity, the subject matter of such revelations and reflections must be as varied as the lives of the narrators ; and this is also true of the method of the narration and of the style in which it is written. There is room here for every form, from the simple, direct narrative to the polished work of art. To a certain extent, indeed, method and style may prove to be additional revelations of the author's personality. He may reveal himself, he may even betray himself, in his work. Here, as elsewhere, it may prove that *qui s'excuse, s'accuse*, or that it is easily possible to protest too much.

Yet these will be the exceptions, and for the most part the autobiographer will reconstruct his own past life and experiences with the object of furnishing as reliable a record as he possibly can. Much will depend upon the object with which he is writing ; something, too, upon his point of view. Of the authors of the selections here presented, Dr. Munthe refuses to classify his *Story of San Michele* as either Autobiography or Memoirs ; and says " I am aware that some of the scenes in this book are laid on the ill-defined border-land between the real and the unreal, the dangerous

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No Man's Land between fact and fancy, where so many writers of memoirs have come to grief, and where Goethe himself was apt to lose his bearings in his *Dichtung und Wahrheit*." Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell, on the other hand, calls his *All Summer in a Day* an Autobiographical Fantasia, and declares that this is the spirit in which it should be read. "I have chosen," he writes, "but one or two ghosts from my cupboard, brightly glittering ones by preference, whom I have dangled in the light for a few moments, before I put them back in their dark corner."

We can never be sufficiently grateful to him for his willingness thus to introduce his "ghosts" to us while he is still in the days of his youth, instead of waiting until later in life to write "a conventional autobiography, replete with little anecdotes and every kind of malice he could arrive at." For we are convinced of the truth of his suggestion that "it is surely of more value to set forth your memories when you are twenty-five than after you have reached seventy-five." This idea, indeed, seems greatly to appeal to autobiographers of the present generation, which does not seem willing to pay overmuch reverence to the years which are supposed to bring the philosophic mind. Cellini, it is true, thought that no writer should commence such a record before he had passed his fortieth year, but then Cellini did not think of writing his own *Memoirs* until he was fifty-eight.

Robert Graves, at the age of thirty-three, has recorded, in *Good-bye to All That*, the story of that part of his life which he can look upon as past and done with, instead of following the fashion

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of those who wait "until they are at least ninety before publishing, and even then only tell the truth about characters long dead and without influential descendants." Storm Jameson, too, has considered that there is *No Time like the Present* in which to show us frankly the factors in her life which have helped to mould her writings, and especially to make us realize the influence of the catastrophe of the Great War upon the mind of a sensitive woman.

Frankness is indeed an outstanding feature of many present-day memoirs, a feature which often makes them documents of very valuable sociological and historical significance. Lady Asquith's autobiography, for example, has this value to a pronounced degree, as indeed we ought to expect from her own suggestion that "in writing about yourself or other living people you must take your courage in both hands." H. G. Wells also, in that *Experiment in Autobiography*, which will constitute so valuable a record for future sociologists, strikes the same note.

The material which the autobiographer has at his disposal is of necessity conditioned by the opportunities that have fallen to him of parleying with people of importance, or of sharing at first hand in the really conspicuous events of his day and generation. It must vary also with his ability to recall, as well as to tell of the events. Mr. Sitwell points out how difficult it is for people to remember, unless they have had their memory trained in some way, and we can scarcely hope for scientific detachment in a personal narrative unless, indeed, the narrator has been trained to approach subjects scientifically. There can be

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few or no writers of memoirs, for example, who have had so perfect a training for their task as Mrs. Sidney Webb, and her analysis of the life of London Society in the 'seventies and 'eighties of the nineteenth century, is, in consequence, more than a personal recollection ; it is a searchlight thrown by a trained sociological worker on the life and usages of that society. How thoroughly in keeping with the work to which she devoted her life is her observation : "I discovered that personal vanity was an 'occupational disease' of London Society."

It would, however, be foolish to expect from all writers either the frankness or the trained ability of which we have spoken. We must, for the most part, be content with a more ordinary narrative, though not necessarily a less revealing one, from those whose paths in life have fallen in quieter places. But though many of these personal records must naturally be simple and direct, and their literary value at times somewhat small, they are not to be despised or rejected on that account. The desire to relate may well be considerably greater than the ability to write artistically, and the historical value of the narrative be out of all proportion to its literary worth.

The autobiography, the memoir, the diary, and other kindred forms are part of the life-blood of history. It is almost impossible to survey the Court life of France in the early eighteenth century without thinking of Saint-Simon, or to recall the days of Restoration England without a memory of Samuel Pepys. However much our modern scientific biographers may set their

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imaginings to work upon their task, however much they may feel disposed to sacrifice accuracy in the interests of artistry, they will always return to the autobiography or memoir or other form of personal record for the foundations upon which they have to build.

## I

## AXEL MUNTHE

## I. The Bird Sanctuary

[Dr. Axel Munthe is a Swede by birth and an Englishman by choice. He is a Doctor of Medicine of the University of Paris, but now lives in retirement at Torre di Materita in the Isle of Capri. His *Story of San Michele* tells of his association with this island, and of his adventures (the word is used advisedly) in Sweden, Lapland, France—especially Paris, and Italy—especially Rome and Naples. This story of his life, one of the most popular memoirs of recent years, or as he would perhaps prefer to say, these fragments of clay broken from his life, is told in a manner approaching perfection. It was begun at the instigation of the novelist, Henry James, to help the author endure the terrible infliction of failing eyesight.]

I SELDOM failed to go to church on Easter Sunday to take up my place at the door by the side of blind old Cecatiello, the official beggar of Anacapri. We both stretched out our hands to the church-goers, he for his soldo and I for the bird in the pocket of the men, in the folds of the black mantiglia of the women, in the palms of the hands of the children. It speaks a good deal for the exceptional position I enjoyed in those days among the villagers that they accepted without resentment my interfering with their way of celebrating

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the resurrection of Our Lord, consecrated by the tradition of nearly two thousand years and still encouraged by their priests. From the first day of the Holy Week the traps had been set in every vineyard, under every olive-tree. For days hundreds of small birds, a string tied round their wing, had been dragged about the streets by all the boys of the village. Now, mutilated symbols of the Holy Dove, they were to be set free in the church to play their rôle in the jubilant commemoration of Christ's return to Heaven. They never returned to their sky, they fluttered about for a while helpless and bewildered, breaking their wings against the windows before they fell down to die on the church floor. At daybreak I had been up on the church roof with Mastro Nicola holding the ladder as my unwilling assistant, in order to smash some of the window-panes, but only a very few of the doomed birds found their way to freedom.

The birds ! The birds ! How much happier would not my life on the beautiful island have been had I not loved them as I do ! I loved to see them come every spring in thousands and thousands, it was a joy to my ear to hear them sing in the garden of San Michele. But there came a time when I almost wished that they had not come, when I wished I could have signalled to them far out on the sea to fly on, fly on with the flock of wild geese high overhead, straight to my own country far in the North where they would be safe from man. For I knew that the fair island that was a paradise to me was a hell to them, like that other hell that awaited them farther on on their Via Crucis, Heligoland. They came just

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before sunrise. All they asked for was to rest for a while after their long flight across the Mediterranean, the goal of the journey was so far away, the land where they were born and where they were to raise their young. They came in thousands: wood-pigeons, thrushes, turtle-doves, waders, quails, golden orioles, skylarks, nightingales, wagtails, chaffinches, swallows, warblers, redbreasts, and many other tiny artists on their way to give spring concerts to the silent forests and fields in the North. A couple of hours later they fluttered helplessly in the nets the cunning of man had stretched all over the island from the cliffs by the sea high up to the slopes of Monte Solaro and Monte Barbarossa. In the evening they were packed by hundreds in small wooden boxes without food and water, and dispatched by steamers to Marseilles to be eaten with delight in the smart restaurants of Paris. It was a lucrative trade, Capri was for centuries the seat of a bishop entirely financed by the sale of the netted birds.

“ *Il vescovo delle quaglie*,” he was called in Rome. Do you know how they are caught in the nets ? Hidden under the thickets, between the poles, are caged decoy birds who repeat incessantly, automatically their monotonous call. They cannot stop, they go on calling out night and day till they die. Long before science knew anything about the localization of the various nerve-centres in the human brain, the devil had revealed to his disciple man his ghastly discovery that by stinging out the eyes of a bird with a red-hot needle the bird would sing automatically. It is an old story, it was already known to the Greeks and the Romans, it is still done to-day all along the south-

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ern shores of Spain, Italy,<sup>1</sup> and Greece. Only a few birds in a hundred survive the operation; still it is good business, a blinded quail is worth twenty-five lire in Capri to-day. During six weeks of the spring and six weeks of the autumn, the whole slope of Monte Barbarossa was covered with nets from the ruined castle on the top down to the garden-wall of San Michele at the foot of the mountain. It was considered the best *caccia* on the whole island, as often as not over a thousand birds were netted there in a single day. The mountain was owned by a man from the mainland, an ex-butcher, a famous specialist in the blinding of birds, my only enemy in Anacapri except the doctor. Ever since I had begun building San Michele the war between him and me had been going on incessantly. I had appealed to the Prefect of Naples, I had appealed to the Government in Rome, I had been told there was nothing to be done, the mountain was his, the law was on his side. I had obtained an audience from the highest Lady in the land, she had smiled at me with her enchanting smile that had won her the heart of the whole of Italy, she had honoured me with an invitation to remain for luncheon, the first word I had read on the menu had been "Pâté d'alouettes farcies." I had appealed to the Pope and had been told by a fat cardinal that the Holy Father had been carried down in his portantina that very morning at daybreak to the Vatican gardens to watch the netting of the birds, the *caccia* had been good, over two hundred birds had been caught. I had scraped off the rust from the little two-pounder

<sup>1</sup> Now forbidden by law.

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the English had abandoned in the garden in 1808, and started firing off a shot every five minutes from midnight till sunrise in the hope of frightening away the birds from the fatal mountain. The ex-butcher had sued me for interfering with the lawful exercise of his trade, I had been fined two hundred lire damages. I had trained all the dogs to bark the whole night at the cost of what little sleep remained for me. A few days later my big Maremma dog died suddenly, I found traces of arsenic in his stomach. I caught sight of the murderer the next night lurking behind the garden-wall and knocked him down. He sued me again, I was fined five hundred lire for assault. I had sold my beautiful Greek vase and my beloved Madonna by Desiderio di Settingnano in order to raise the enormous sum he had asked for the mountain, several hundred times its value. When I came with the money he renewed his old tactics, and grinned at me that the price had been doubled. He knew his man. My exasperation had reached a point when I might have parted with everything I possessed to become the owner of the mountain. The bird slaughter went on as before. I had lost my sleep, I could think of nothing else. In my despair I fled from San Michele and sailed for Monte Cristo to return when the last birds had passed over the island.

The first thing I heard when I came back was that the ex-butcher was lying on the point of death. Masses were read for his salvation twice a day in the church at thirty lire apiece, he was one of the richest men in the village. Towards evening arrived the parroco asking me in the name of Christ to visit the dying man. The village

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doctor suspected pneumonia, the chemist was sure it was a stroke, the barber thought it was un colpo di sangue, the midwife thought it was una paura. The parroco himself, always on the look-out for the evil eye, inclined towards the mal'occhio. I refused to go. I said I had never been a doctor in Capri except for the poor, and that the resident physicians on the island were quite capable of coping with any of these ailments. Only on one condition would I come, that the man would swear on the crucifix that if he pulled through he would never again sting out the eyes of a bird and that he would sell me the mountain at his exorbitant price of a month ago. The man refused. In the night he was given the Last Sacraments. At daybreak the parroco appeared again. My offer had been accepted, he had sworn on the crucifix. Two hours later I tapped a pint of pus from his left pleura to the consternation of the village doctor and to the glory of the village saint, for, contrary to my expectations, the man recovered. Miracolo ! Miracolo !

The mountain of Barbarossa is now a bird sanctuary. Thousands of tired birds of passage are resting on its slopes every spring and autumn, safe from man and beast. The dogs of San Michele are forbidden to bark while the birds are resting on the mountain. The cats are never let out of the kitchen except with a little alarm-bell tied round their necks, Billy, the vagabond, is shut up in the monkey-house, one never knows what a monkey or a schoolboy is up to.

So far I have never said a word to belittle the last miracle of Sant' Antonio which at a low

estimate saved for many years the lives of at least fifteen thousand birds a year. But when all is over for me, I mean just to whisper to the nearest angel that, with all due respect to Sant' Antonio, it was I and not he who tapped the pus out of the butcher's left pleura, and to implore the angel to put in a kind word for me if nobody else will. I am sure Almighty God loves the birds, or He would not have given them the same pair of wings as He has given to His own angels.

## 2. The Festa di Sant' Antonio

The *festa di Sant' Antonio* was the greatest day in the year for Anacapri. For weeks the little village had been all astir for the solemn commemoration of our Patron Saint. The streets had been cleaned, the houses where the procession had to pass had been whitewashed, the church decorated with red silk hangings and tapestries, the fireworks ordered from Naples, the band, most important of all, hired from Torre Annunziata. The series of festivals opened with the arrival of the band on the eve of the great day. Half across the bay the band had already to begin to blow all they were worth, far too far away to be heard by us in Anacapri, but near enough with favourable wind to irritate the ears of the Capresi in the hated village below. On landing at the Marina the band and their gigantic instruments were packed in two big carts and taken as far as the carriage road was finished. The rest of the way they had to climb in loose formation up the steep Phœnician steps, blowing incessantly. Under

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the wall of San Michele they were received by a deputation from the Municipio. The magnificent bandmaster in his gorgeous uniform all covered with gold lace à la Murat raised his baton and, preceded by the boys of the village, the band made their solemn entrance into Anacapri a tempo di marcia blowing their horns, clarinets, and oboes, banging their drums and cymbals and rattling their triangles as hard as they could. Inauguration concert on the Piazza all decorated with flags and crammed with people, lasting without any interval till midnight. A few hours' dreamless sleep in the old barracks where the English soldiers slept in 1806, interrupted by the bursting of the first rockets to announce that the great day was dawning. At 4 a.m. reveille through the village blowing lustily in the fresh morning breeze. At 5 the usual morning mass in church read as always by the parroco assisted, in honour of the occasion, by the band on empty stomachs. At 7 merenda, a cup of black coffee, half a kilo of bread, and fresh goat-cheese. At 8 the church was already filled to the last place, the men on one side, the women on the other, their babies asleep on their laps. In the centre of the church the band on their specially erected tribune. The twelve priests of Anacapri in their choir stalls behind the High Altar embarked courageously on the Missa Solennis of Pergolesi, trusting to Providence and the accompanying band to see them through. Musical intermezzo, a furious galop played by the band with great bravura, much appreciated by the congregation. At 10 o'clock Messa Cantata from the High Altar with painful solos by poor old Don Antonio and tremolos of protestation and sudden

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cries of distress from the inside of the little organ, worn out by the wear and tear of three centuries. At 11 sermon from the pulpit in commemoration of Sant' Antonio and his miracles, each miracle illustrated and made visible by a special gesture appropriate to the occasion. Now the orator would raise his hands in ecstasy to the Saints in Heaven, now he would point his index to the floor to locate the underground dwellings of the damned. Now he would fall on his knees in silent prayers to Sant' Antonio suddenly to spring to his feet on the point of precipitating himself from the pulpit, to smite down an invisible scoffer with a blow from his fist. Now he would bend his head in rapturous silence to listen to the happy chants of the angels, now, pale with terror, he would put his hands to his ears not to hear the grinding of the teeth of il Demonio and the cries of the sinners in their cauldrons. At last, streaming with perspiration and prostrated by two hours of tears and sobs and maledictions at a temperature of 105 Fahrenheit, he would sink down on the floor of the pulpit with a terrific curse on the Protestants. Twelve o'clock. Great excitement on the Piazza. Esce la processione ! Esce la processione ! The procession is coming out. First came a dozen small children, almost babies, hand in hand. Some wore short white tunics and angel wings like Raphael's putti. Some, entirely naked and adorned with garlands of vine-leaves and wreaths of roses round their brows, looked as if detached from a Greek bas-relief. Then came the Figlie di Maria, tall slender girls in white robes and long blue veils with the silver medal of the Madonna round their necks on a blue ribbon.

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Then came the *bizzoche*, in black dresses and black-veils, dried-up old spinsters who had remained faithful to their first love, Jesus Christ. Then came the "Congrega di Carità" preceded by their banner, old, grave-looking men in their quaint black and white cassocks of the time of Savonarola.

La musica ! La musica !

Then came the band in their gold-laced uniforms from the time of the Bourbon kings of Naples, preceded by their magnificent bandmaster, blowing for all they were worth a wild polka, a special favourite piece of the saint, I understood. Then, surrounded by all the priests in their gala robes and saluted by hundreds of crackers, appeared Sant' Antonio erect on his throne, his hand stretched out in the act of blessing. His robe was covered with precious lace and strewn with jewels and ex-votos, his mantle of magnificent old brocatello was fastened on his breast with a fibula of sapphires and rubies. From a string of multi-coloured glass beads round his neck hung a huge coral in the shape of a horn to protect him against the evil eye.

Close on the heels of Sant' Antonio came I, bare-headed, wax taper in hand, walking by the side of the Sindaco—an honour bestowed upon me by special permission from the Archbishop of Sorrento. Then came the municipal councillors relieved for the day from their grave responsibility. Then came the notables of Anacapri : the doctor, the notary, the apothecary, the barber, the tobacconist, the tailor. Then came il popolo : sailors, fishermen, contadini, followed at a respectful distance by their womenfolk and their

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children. In the rear of the procession walked humbly half a dozen dogs, a couple of goats with their kids trotting by their side, and a pig or two, on the look-out for their owners. Specially selected masters of ceremony, gilt sticks in their hands, Gold Sticks in Waiting to the Saint, rushed incessantly to and fro along the flank of the procession to keep order in the ranks and to regulate the speed. As the procession wound its way through the lanes, basketfuls of sweet-scented ginestra, the favourite flower of the saint, were thrown from every window. The broom is in fact called the *fiore di Sant' Antonio*. Here and there a cord had been stretched across the street from one window to another, and just as the saint passed by, a gaily-coloured cardboard angel was seen performing a precipitate flight with flapping wings across the rope to the huge delight of the crowd. In front of San Michele the procession halted, and the saint was reverently deposited on a specially erected stand to rest for a while. The clergy wiped the perspiration from their foreheads, the band kept on blowing their fortissimo as they had done ever since they issued from the church two hours before, Sant' Antonio looked on benevolently from his stand while my womenfolk threw handfuls of roses from the windows, old Pacciale rang the bells from the chapel, and Baldassare lowered the flag from the roof of the house. It was a grand day for us all, everybody was proud of the honour paid to us. The dogs watched the proceedings from the pergola, well behaved and polite as usual though somewhat restless. In the garden the tortoises continued impassive to ponder upon their own problems, the

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mongoose was too busy to give way to his curiosity. The little owl sat blinking with half-closed eyes on his perch, thinking of something else. Billy, being an unbeliever, was shut up in the monkey-house, from where he kept up an infernal din, shouting at the top of his voice, banging his water-bottle against his tin bowl, rattling his chain, shaking his bars, and using the most horrible language.

Back to the Piazza where Sant' Antonio saluted by a tremendous detonation of crackers, was reinstalled in his shrine in the church, and the procession went home to their macaroni. The band sat down to a banquet offered by the authorities under the pergola of the Hotel Paradiso half a kilo of macaroni per head, vino a volontà. At four the doors of San Michele were flung open, half an hour later the whole village was in the garden, rich and poor, men, women, and children and new-born babies, cripples, idiots, blind, and lame, those who could not come by themselves were carried on the shoulders of the others. Only the priests were absentees, though not by any fault of theirs. Prostrated by their long wanderings they leaned back in their choir stalls behind the High Altar in fervent prayers to Sant' Antonio, audible maybe to the saint himself in his shrine, but seldom to anybody else who happened to look into the empty church. A long row of tables with huge piretti of San Michele's best wine stretched from one end of the pergola to the other. Old Pacciale, Baldassare, and Mastro Nicola were hard at work re-filling the wine-glasses, and Giovannina, Rosina and Elisa, went round offering cigars to the men, coffee to the women, and cakes and sweets to the children. The band, by special

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arrangement with the authorities lent to me for the afternoon, was blowing incessantly from the upper loggia. The whole house was thrown open, nothing was locked up, all my precious belongings were lying about as usual in their apparent disorder on tables, chairs, and on the floor. Over a thousand people wandered freely from room to room, nothing was ever touched, nothing was ever missing. When the bells rang Ave Maria the reception was over, and they all went away after much handshaking, happier than ever, but that is what wine is made for. The band in better form than ever led the way to the Piazza. The twelve priests relieved and refreshed by their vigil over Sant' Antonio stood already in compact formation outside the church doors. The Sindaco, the municipal councillors and the notables took their seats on the terrace of the municipio. The band gasping for breath hoisted themselves and their instruments on the specially erected tribune. The popolo stood in the Piazza packed like herrings. The majestic bandmaster raised his baton, the Gran Concerto began. Rigoletto, Il Trovatore, Gli Ughenotti, I Puritani, Il Ballo in Maschera, a choice selection of Neapolitan folksongs, polkas, mazurkas, minuets, and tarantellas in uninterrupted succession and ever increasing tempo until eleven o'clock, when two thousand lire worth of rockets, Roman candles, catherine wheels, and crackers exploded in the air to the glory of Sant' Antonio. At midnight the official programme for the festivity was exhausted, but not so the Anacapresi and the band. Nobody went to bed, the village resounded with singing, laughter, and music the whole night long.

## THE FESTA DI SANT' ANTONIO

Evviva la gioia ! Evviva il Santo ! Evviva la musica !

The band was to depart by the six o'clock morning boat. On their way to the Marina they halted at daybreak under the windows of San Michele for their customary "Serenate d'Addio" in my honour. I can still see Henry James looking down from his bedroom window, shaking with laughter, in his pyjamas. The band had been sadly reduced in numbers and efficiency during the night. The bandmaster had become delirious, two of the leading oboists had spit blood, the bassoon had had a rupture, the big drummer had dislocated his right shoulder-blade, the cymbalist had split his ear-drums. Two more members of the band incapacitated by emotion had had to be taken down to the Marina on donkeys. The survivors lay on their backs in the middle of the road blowing with their last breath their plaintive Serenata d'Addio to San Michele. Revived by a cup of black coffee they staggered speechless to their feet, and with a friendly waving of their hands they reeled down the Phœnician steps to the Marina. The Festa di Sant' Antonio was over.

*The Story of San Michele.* 1924.

## H. G. WELLS

## Work as a Science Teacher

[The name of H. G. Wells has become a household word to many thousands of readers throughout the world; and his *Experiment in Autobiography* is a valuable document to students of both literature and sociology. It tells the story of his early struggle for a living and of his rise to fame; it also teaches his carefully-thought-out philosophy of life. One realizes from it too the extent to which his personal experiences as shop assistant, science student, journalist, teacher, and novelist have contributed to his novels. As becomes the scientist, with his passion for experiment and love of the truth, this autobiography is itself an experiment, and is bound up with his ideas for a reconstructed world.]

FROM my departure from Southsea in 1883 to my return to London in 1888, the history of this brain of mine was mainly a story of growth and learning things. It acquired as much, decided as much, and was exercised as much as if it had been inside the skull of a university scholar. It developed a coherent picture of the world and learnt the use of the English language and the beginnings of literary form. But from my emergence from St. Pancras Station to find lodgings and a job, this brain, for the better part of a year, was so occupied with the immediate struggle for life, so near to

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hunger and exposure and so driven by material needs, that I do not think it added anything very much to either its content or power. It was only after a term or so at Henley House School that it began to take notice of external things again and resume its criticism of, and its disinterested attack upon, existence in general.

This Henley House School was, financially, a not very successful private school in Kilburn. It was housed in a brace of semi-detached villas, very roughly adapted to its educational needs. It drew its boys from the region of Maida Vale and St. John's Wood; the parents were theatrical, artistic, professional, and business people who from motives of economy or affection preferred to have their sons living at home. There were only a few boarders. It was a privately owned school, and J. V. Milne, the proprietor, was responsible to no earthly authority for what he did or did not teach. In one of the houses he lived with his family, and in the other were the various class-rooms and the assistants' room of the school. The playground was a walled gravelly enclosure that had once been two back gardens. It was too small for anything but the most scuffling of games. Equipment was little better than it had been in Morley's school; the desks were not so age-worn and there were more blackboards and maps. But it remained—skimpy. When I entered upon my duties, J. V. came to me and pressed a golden sovereign into my hand. "Get whatever apparatus you require for your science teaching," he said.

"And if there is any change?" I asked, with this fund, this endowment, in my hand.

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" You can give me an account later."

I had to administer this grant very carefully. The existing apparatus was huddled into what had once been a small bedroom cupboard on the second floor, and was in an extremely ruinous condition. My predecessor had been a Frenchman, and very evidently a man of great persistence of character. His chemical teaching had apparently reached a climax in the production of oxygen by heating potassium permanganate in a glass flask. Young Roberts, the son of Arthur Roberts, the comedian, said it had been a very great lesson indeed. Those were primitive times in glass manufacture, and the ordinary test-tube or Florentine flask was not of a special refractory glass as it is now, and it cracked and flew at the slightest irregularity in its heating. My predecessor had put his permanganate in a flask, put the flask on a tripod, set a Bunsen burner beneath it and made all the necessary arrangements for collecting his oxygen. But before there was any oxygen worth mentioning to collect, the flask flew with a loud crack and its bottom descended upon the flame. My predecessor rallied his forces and put a second Florentine flask into action, with exactly the same result. A certain joyousness invaded the class as, with the spirit of the French at Waterloo, a third flask was thrown into the struggle. And so on, *da capo*; joy increased and open demonstrations had to be repressed. At the end there were no more Florentine flasks, and the applause broke out unhindered. The cupboard was chiefly occupied by these shattered flasks neatly arranged, each over its own proper detached bottom.

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I meditated upon these vestiges of experimental science and upon what seemed to me to be the evidence of an attempt to make carbon-dioxide out of blackboard chalk—an attempt fore-ordained to failure because blackboard chalk is not chalk and contains no carbon-dioxide. And I considered my still intact sovereign.

I discussed the matter with J. V. "Mr. Milne," I said, "I think experimental demonstrations before a class are a great mistake."

"They certainly have a very bad effect on discipline," he remarked.

"I propose," I said, "with your permission, to draw all my experiments upon the blackboard—in coloured chalks which I shall buy out of this pound—to explain clearly and fully exactly what happens, and to make the class copy out these experiments in a note-book. I have never known an experiment on a blackboard go wrong. On the other hand, these attempts at an excessive realism—"

"I am quite of your mind," he said.

"Later on, however, I may dissect a rabbit bit by bit and make them draw that. I may dissect it under water, because that is cleaner and prettier than a heap of viscera on a board, and I shall have to buy a large baking-dish and cork and lead and pins."

"It will not be—indelicate?"

"It need not be. I will show them what to see on the blackboard."

"One never knows what parents will find to object to. However—if you want to do it. . . ."

In this way I contrived, without extravagance, to train my classes to draw, write, and understand

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about a great many things that would have been much more puzzling for them if they had encountered them in all the rich confusion of actuality. I never attempted to use the chemical balance, for example; chemical balances, especially if they have been left to brood in the darkness of bedroom cupboards, will seize upon the slightest pretext to confute the hasty experimentalist; and, moreover, my predecessor had lost most of the weights. My boys therefore missed the usual stinks and bangs of scientific instruction, and acquired instead a real grasp of scientific principles and scientific quantities, together with a facility in illustrating examination answers that stood them in good stead in the years immediately before them.

I found Milne a really able teacher, keen to do his best for his boys and with a curious obstinate originality, and I learnt very much from him about discipline and management. Finance, I knew, was worrying him a good deal, but he watched his boys closely, and would slacken, intensify, or change their work with a skilled apprehension of their idiosyncrasies. He would think of them at night. The boys had confidence in him and in us, and I never knew a better mannered school. He was friendly and sympathetic with me from the outset. He was a little grey-clad extremely dolichocephalic man with glasses, a pointed nose, and a small beard, rather shy in his manner; he had a phantom lisp, and there was a sort of confidential relationship between his head and his shoulders. His original proposal was that I should be resident English, science, and drawing master at £60 a year. But I wanted to go on

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living with my aunt and cousin at Fitzroy Road, I detested Sunday duty, and I wanted to write or to work at my preparation for the Intermediate Examination in the London University, in all the spare time I could get. So I offered to forgo my residence and all my meals except the midday one, if I could come at nine and vanish at or before five. And I stipulated that I should do no scripture teaching, as I felt I could not do it in good faith. The arrangement worked very well for us both. He liked my putting in that conscience clause at the risk of not getting a job I evidently wanted.

The midday meal was an excellent one, attended by a number of the day-boys. With memories of Holt in my mind, I wrote to Simmons effusively, praising the cleanliness, the table napkins, and particularly the flowers on the table. In my world hitherto there had been no flowers on the meal table anywhere. And at the end of the table, facing me, sat Mrs. Milne, rather concerned if I did not eat enough, because I was still, she thought, scandalously thin.

I suppose the day is not so very remote when the last of these private schools will have vanished from the earth. Fifty years ago they were still responsible for the education, or want of education, of a considerable fraction of the British middle-class. They were under no public control at all. Any one might own one, any one might teach in one, no standard of attainment was required of them ; the parents dipped their sons into them as they thought proper, and took them out when they thought they were done. Certain university and quasi-public bodies conducted

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examinations to which a number of the brighter pupils were submitted in order to enhance the prestige of the establishment, and these examining bodies exerted a distinct influence upon the choice of subjects. For the most part these private schools passed the middle-class youth of England on to business or professional life incapable of any foreign language, incapable, indeed, of writing or speaking their own except in the clumsiest manner, unable to use their eyes and hands to draw or handle apparatus, grossly ignorant of physical science, history, or economics, contemptuous of the board-school boy, and with just enough consciousness of their deficiencies to make them suspicious of, and hostile to, intellectual ability and equipment.

It is only when the nature of the English private school education is grasped that it becomes possible to understand why the enormous possibilities of world predominance and world control, manifest in the British political expansion during the nineteenth century, wilted away so rapidly under the stresses of the subsequent years. Its direction was dull, ignorant, pretentious, and blundering. I have given a glimpse of the British private school at its worst in my brief account of Holt Academy ; J. V. Milne and Jones were almost at opposite poles of conscience and intelligence ; Milne was a man who won my unstinted admiration and remained my friend throughout life ; nevertheless it is useless to pretend that Henley House was more than a sketch of good intentions or that we stirred up a tithe of the finer possibilities of the boys who passed under our hands. We taught them a few tricks, we got them a few

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“certificates,” we did something for their manners and personal bearing, we dropped some fruitful hints into them, but we gave them no coherent and sustaining vision of life. One or two of the Henley House boys were destined to play a fairly conspicuous rôle in English affairs. Our prize boy, our whale, so to speak, was Lord Northcliffe, who did so much to create the modern newspaper and died controlling owner of the *Times*. He can very well be studied as a sample of the limitations of the English private school education—and indeed of English education generally.

In making these criticisms I am not blaming J. V. Milne. In view of his conditions and resources he did wonderfully. He could hardly pay his way; the two rather battered villas, and that one golden sovereign for all the apparatus required for science teaching, give the measure of his means. When later on an opportunity offered, he got out of Kilburn and ran a more spaciously equipped school, Streete Court at Westgate-on-Sea. But for Henley House, he could not pick and choose his assistants; economies and compromises cramped his style, and in endless respects the school made itself in spite of all his efforts to mould and direct it.

Nevertheless he had in operation an honour system of discipline that was far in advance of the times. It is a little too complex to explain here, but it was decidedly better than the discipline under Sanderson of Oundle, which I was to study later. A cane hung in Milne’s study, a symbol of force as the ultimate sanction, but it was never used in my time, and I do not think it had been used for some years before. He was understand-

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ingly interested by my abandonment of the worst pretences of "practical" demonstration in my science teaching, he watched and discussed my use of the note-book system of binding work together that I had picked up from Byatt and seen misapplied by Judd, and when later I innovated in the mathematical work, threw out all the muddling-about with money sums, weights and measures, business "practice" and so forth that cumbered the teaching (and examining) of arithmetic, and took a class of small boys between six and eight straight away from the first four rules to easy algebra, he was delighted. In those days that was a new and bold thing to do. We got to fractions, quadratics, and problems involving quadratics in a twelvemonth, and laid the foundations of two or three university careers by way of mathematics. A. A. Milne, the novelist and playwright, was one of that band of young hopefuls, and his brother Ken and Batsford the publisher.

The sense of Milne's observation and interest quickened my teaching greatly. I would prepare little stunts for him and the boys. It was amusing to stroll up to the blackboard in an offhand way and draw the outline of England or Scotland or North America from memory. (One had to be particularly wary about the relative latitude of the east and west coasts and the rest followed.) One could stand with one's back to a whole class and yet have every boy still and interested. The wickedest would be following the chalk line and comparing it with his *Atlas* if only in the hope of saying, "Please, Sir," and making a correction.

Where Henley House was most defective from

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a modern point of view was in its failure to establish any social and political outlook. But there J. V. suffered not only from the limitations of a poorly financed private adventurer who had to make his school "pay," but also from the lax and aimless mentality of the period in which he was living. The old European order, as I have pointed out already in the chapter on my origins, was far gone in decay, and had lost sight of any conception of an object in life. The new order had still to discover itself and its objectives. In the eighteenth century, a school in Protestant England pointed every life in it, either towards hell-fire or eternal bliss ; its intellectual and moral training was all more or less relevant to and tested by the requirements of that pilgrimage ; for that in the long run you were being prepared. That double glow of gold and red had faded out almost completely from the school perspectives of 1890, but nothing had taken its place. The idea of the modern world-state must ultimately determine the curriculum and disciplines of every school on earth, but even to-day only a few teachers apprehend that, and in my Henley House days the idea of that social and political necessity had hardly dawned. The schools and universities just went on teaching things in what was called the "general education"—because they had always been taught. "Why do we learn Latin, Sir ?" asked our bright boys. "What is the good of this chemistry, Sir, if I am to go into a bank ?" Or, "Does it really matter, Sir, now, *how* Henry VII. was related to Henry IV.?"

We were teaching some "subjects," as the times went, fairly well, we were getting more than

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average results in outside examinations. But collectively, comprehensively we were teaching nothing at all. We were completely ignoring the primary function of the school in human society, which is to correlate the intelligence, will, and conscience of the individual to the social process. We were unaware of a social process. Not only were Henley House, and the private schools generally, imparting this nothingness of outlook, but except for a certain gangster esprit-de-corps in various of the other public schools and military seminaries, "governing class" sentiment and the like, the same blankness pervaded the whole educational organization of the community. We taught no history of human origins, nothing about the structure of civilization, nothing of social or political life. We did not make, we did not even attempt to make participating citizens. We launched our boys, with, or more commonly without, a university "local" or matriculation certificate, as mere irresponsible adventurers into an uncharted scramble for life.

And this is where our big specimen of output, our whale, Northcliffe, comes in. His story is a very illuminating demonstration of the effects of private school insufficiencies upon social development.

He was eldest of the numerous family of an adventurous barrister, Harmsworth, from Dublin, who came to London with a capable and energetic wife, to make a great career, and did not do so. He won only a moderate measure of success; he was "Counsel to the Great Northern Railway," and so forth; and his political activities never advanced beyond one of those mock parliaments

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in which politically minded men displayed their quality and tempered themselves for real political activities. The Camden Town Parliament never got down to any social or economic principles. It was a training in saying, "Mr. Speaker, Sir, the right honourable member for Little Ditcham," in moving "the previous question," and such-like necessary superficialities of the political game. He died in 1889 when his eldest son was twenty-four years old, but the mother, a woman oddly reminiscent in her vitality and character of Lætitia Bonaparte, survived to 1925, three years after the death of Northcliffe.

Alfred was born in 1865, a little more than a year before me, and he seems to have entered Henley House School when he was nine or ten years old. He made a very poor impression on his teachers, and became one of those unsatisfactory, rather heavy, good-tempered boys who in the usual course of things drift ineffectively through school to some second-rate employment. It was J. V.'s ability that saved him from that. Somewhen about the age of twelve, Master Harmsworth became possessed of a jelly-graph for the reproduction of MS. in violet ink, and with this he set himself to produce a mock newspaper. J. V., with the soundest pedagogic instinct, seized upon the educational possibilities of this display of interest and encouraged young Harmsworth, violet with copying-ink and not quite sure whether he had done well or ill, to persist with the *Henley House Magazine* even at the cost of his school work. The first number appeared in 1878; the first printed number in 1881 "edited by Alfred C. Harmsworth," and I possess all the subsequent

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issues up to the end of 1893, when Milne transferred his school to Streete Court. During my stay at Henley House, I contributed largely, and among others who had a hand in the magazine was A. J. Montefiore, who was later to edit the *Educational Review*, and A. A. Milne ("aged six"—at his first appearance in print), the novelist, essayist, and playwright.

Now neither Milne nor any one in the Harmsworth family, as they scanned the early issues of this little publication, had the faintest suspicion of the preposterous thrust of opportunity that it was destined to give its youthful editor. But in the eighties the first school generation educated under the Education Act of 1871 was demanding cheap reading matter, and wanting something a little easier than the *Chambers' Journal* and a little less simply feminine than the *Family Herald*. A shrewd pharmaceutical chemist named Newnes tried to make a modest profit out of a periodical, originally of cuttings and quotations, *Tit-Bits*, and made a great fortune. Almost simultaneously our Harmsworth, pursuing print as if by instinct, tried to turn a modest hundred or so, by creating *Answers to Correspondents* (1888), which, among other things, provided me, as I have told, with a few useful shillings a week during its first year of issue. He had been ill for a brief period after leaving school in 1882, and he had worked not so very successfully at outside journalism. *Answers* hung fire for a time, until it dropped its initial idea and set out to imitate and beat *Tit-Bits* at its own game, with the aid of prize competitions.

Neither Newnes nor Harmsworth, when they

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launched these ventures, had the slightest idea of the scale of the new forces they were tapping. They thought they were going to sell to a public of at most a few score thousands, and they found they were publishing for the million. They did not climb to success ; they were rather caught by success and blown sky high. I will not even summarize the headlong uprush of Alfred C. Harmsworth and his brother Harold ; how presently they had acquired the *Evening News*, started the *Daily Mail*, and gone from strength to strength, until at last Alfred sat on the highest throne in British journalism, the *Times*, and Harold was one of the richest men in the world.

*Experiment in Autobiography.* 1934.

### III

## LORD RIBBESDALE

### Life with Queen Victoria

[Thomas Lister, fourth Baron Ribblesdale, was Lord-in-Waiting in the Gladstone administration of 1880-85, and the duties of his office brought him into close personal contact with Queen Victoria, and with the leading statesmen of that time. Owing to the position he occupied, the following account is of outstanding importance, and should be read alongside such biographies of the queen as that of Mr. Lytton Strachey.]

VERY few distinguished persons emerge unscathed from the ordeal of Professor Goldwin Smith's appreciation of their capacity or performance. Queen Victoria was not one of the fortunate exceptions ; the Professor says of her : " She was a most ordinary woman, she had no intellect. She disliked the society of intellectual men ; that was why she liked Osborne and Balmoral." This is all wrong. The impression I derived from many inquisitive conversations with persons competent to form an opinion of the Queen's ability—for instance, Sir Henry Ponsonby, Sir A. Bigge, Sir John Cowell, Lady Ely, Miss Horatia Stopford, all of whom saw and worked hard for her every day, and from Cabinet Ministers and distinguished men such as Mr. Lecky and

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Professor Huxley, who both stayed at Windsor when I was in waiting—is that the Queen was a thorough craftswoman in the operation of Government; so much so that it is possible that, like the Laird of Cockpen, her mind was taken up with affairs of State to some exclusion of interest in the kind of things we associate with intellectual cultivation and refinement. At luncheon and dinner, for instance, in the society of cultured men of various mind and prominence, men whom I feel certain she desired to honour, her faculty for easy conversation was so limited as hardly to exist. This seemed to me a pity, for upon the testimony of witnesses who knew what they were talking about, her mind was trained, apt, and efficient. But it was absorbed in politics and the welfare of the State. I fancy that she had never forgotten her strict and early lessons, the thoroughness which the Prince Consort<sup>1</sup> insisted upon in the dutiful discharge of her great position, aided and abetted as he was by King Leopold and Baron Stockmar's unfailing and, in the main, sensible advice. It is quite true that Lord Melbourne's easy-going ways may have acted as some antidote, but Lord Melbourne's influence was removed when he went out of office—the Prince Consort naturally supervened; besides, Lord Melbourne's easy-going ways were much more apparent than real. As a matter of fact, the Queen started her reign under a conscientious and hard-working mentor. But the Queen never learned Lord Melbourne's *dulce est*

<sup>1</sup> Again to quote Mr. Goldwin Smith, this time on the Prince Consort: "Highly cultured and all that sort of thing, but his importation of German ideas into the English Court made him unpopular. A martinet."

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*desipere in loco*, a useful and healthy accomplishment.

There is much in a saying attributed by Madame Campan to Marie Leczinska, "Good kings are slaves and their subjects are free," which fits Queen Victoria. A full recognition of the Queen's masterly experience of constitutional and party government, its problems and considerations, of the unswerving industry she devoted to all and sundry, is attested by most of the statesmen—in their correspondence or in their diaries—who, during her long reign, had to do with the Queen in audience and Council. She knew the game. One cannot imagine her saying in a critical conjuncture—and several had to be faced in her time—anything like Louis XVI.'s comment to his family, on his return from signing the new Constitution, that he felt as if he had fallen off a steeple; and the bad advice tendered by Catherine II. to Marie Antoinette in 1790—"Kings ought to proceed on their career undisturbed by the cries of the people, as the moon pursues her course undisturbed by the howling of dogs," would have quickly found its way into the waste-paper basket, which, Lady Ely told me, on an average working day was several times filled and emptied. To sum up my own notions of the Queen as a woman of affairs, it is that she was stiff in opinion but not inflexible, and that her views were always entitled to the respect we accord to a high sense of duty, to great painstaking, and to a long and varied contact with public men and public affairs. I also think that she derived advantage from having as her private secretary Sir Henry Ponsonby, a man of philosophic tem-

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perament and a Liberal—not indeed in party politics, which he eschewed, but of Liberal persuasions in all matters affecting the relation of Church and State and of Crown and Commons.

It is generally held that her regard for Lord Beaconsfield was to some extent due to the flattering things he said to her. No doubt in some of his letters the bread seems a little overlaid with jam ; for instance, in one he dilates on doing his best to promote and secure “ the blessings of absolute government whilst duly safeguarding the Constitution.” My impression is that the Queen took this sort of thing at its right value. In business no one would be less easily caught by such baby talk. I think, however, that Lord Beaconsfield knew how to put her at her ease, which Mr. Gladstone certainly did not. One way or another, I must have dined a great many times at the Queen’s dinner party, and, as I have already said, I personally never heard her say anything at dinner which I remembered next morning. Her manners were not affable ; she spoke very little at meals, and she ate fast and very seldom laughed. To the dishes she rejected she made a peevish *mouse*, with crumpled brow more eloquent than words.

I have already paid my tribute to the excellence of the teas provided for the Lord-in-Waiting in his own apartments ; it would be ungracious not to record my favourable impressions of the cooking at Windsor. It did not perhaps exhibit the art or originality which Mr. Abraham Hayward declares to be essential, in his amusing essay<sup>1</sup> ; but it was distinguished by unpretentious plenty.

<sup>1</sup> “ The Art of Dining.”

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The wine—alas ! I drank little in those days—was superlative. Prince Christian, who dined constantly at Windsor, and was a gourmet of experience and education in English, German, and French cooking—we were allies in our love for fox-hunting and horses—often called my attention to particular vintages and to particular dishes which might otherwise have escaped my uninformed attention. Cooks of the three nationalities were in charge of our digestions and our appetites, and on the Household dinner menu the name of the cook responsible for each dish, on a foolscap piece of paper, lay at the right hand of the Master of the Household, who presided and watched with satisfaction the hearty degustations of a rather silent company.

But to return to the Queen's table. One thing Prince Christian and we all admired was the four-year-old mutton. On one occasion Lord Hartington found his plate whipped away from him when only half-through a very useful-looking cut from a saddle, doubtless fed on the best of everything at Windsor, though the Queen preferred to think under the shadow of dark Lochnagar. The Queen, as I have said, ate quickly, and the servants had a menial trick of depriving us of our plates directly she had finished. On this particular occasion she had been satisfied with some green peas, the four-year-old mutton having been rejected with the *mouse* I have already spoken of. She could dispose of peas with marvellous skill and celerity, and had got into conversation with Lord Hartington, thus delaying his own operations. They got on very well together. Though Lord Hartington, like Peel and the Duke of

## H. G. WELLS

## Work as a Science Teacher

[The name of H. G. Wells has become a household word to many thousands of readers throughout the world; and his *Experiment in Autobiography* is a valuable document to students of both literature and sociology. It tells the story of his early struggle for a living and of his rise to fame; it also teaches his carefully-thought-out philosophy of life. One realizes from it too the extent to which his personal experiences as shop assistant, science student, journalist, teacher, and novelist have contributed to his novels. As becomes the scientist, with his passion for experiment and love of the truth, this autobiography is itself an experiment, and is bound up with his ideas for a reconstructed world.]

FROM my departure from Southsea in 1883 to my return to London in 1888, the history of this brain of mine was mainly a story of growth and learning things. It acquired as much, decided as much, and was exercised as much as if it had been inside the skull of a university scholar. It developed a coherent picture of the world and learnt the use of the English language and the beginnings of literary form. But from my emergence from St. Pancras Station to find lodgings and a job, this brain, for the better part of a year, was so occupied with the immediate struggle for life, so near to

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many-angled Gothic room with high, plate-glass windows. It opened off the great corridor. There was a small table near the window, and perhaps one or two chairs, but otherwise there were no signs of occupation or life—no papers, no pens, no inkstand, no suggestion of the transactions of State or any other kind of business. The Lord-in-Waiting, when the Queen was ready—I forget how we got to know this—knocked at the door and asked the Queen's pleasure. She would then say who she wished to see first. Her expression and way of giving her instructions never varied. It had a curious grace about it, as if for the moment she made one a partner in a State transaction. Rather to my surprise, the Lord Chamberlain had frequent audiences.

Mr. Gladstone came down often; 1880 to 1885 were very anxious years—Ireland, Egypt, General Gordon. To say the least of it, on public affairs Mr. Gladstone was not in favour. I remember very well one day when he came down with most of his Cabinet—it was at the time of the difficulties in Egypt and the bombardment of Alexandria. The Court gossip was that the Queen was intensely displeased and out of sympathy with Ministers. That day the audiences took place before luncheon: the party had to get back to the House of Commons.

Before being summoned to the Queen's presence, Ministers used to dawdle about in the corridor uneasily, pretending to admire pictures and buhl and ormolu cabinets.

I had by this time got to know Mr. Gladstone, and one of his peculiarities was that he looked upon the whole world as an ear. Given the mood,

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he would talk to an Eton boy with the same dynamics of argument and illustration as to, say, the Archbishop of Canterbury or Professor Huxley.

On this particular day, I could see that he was anxious and harassed : he looked ill, very white, untidy—hair, collar, necktie all going different ways—to use a French word, *ébouriffé*.<sup>1</sup> Thus, as we paced the corridor from end to end, I kept silent. At last, for something to say, I made some allusion to the china in one of the large *vitrines*. Alexandria, Egypt, bombardment were thrown to the winds ; his tired eyes brightened with the preface that at one time of his life he had devoted very considerable attention to china. He knelt down beside the cabinet and entered into a long examination of glazes, marks, dates, relative merits of French and English clays, and so on. In the middle of this I was summoned to the Queen with some acerbity by the Groom-in-Waiting. Mr. Gladstone picked up his box and his papers and we retraced our steps. I knocked at the door for instructions. She wished to see Mr. Gladstone at once. By this time china had been banished to Jupiter and Saturn. Their interview must have been smoother than was anticipated. By lunch-eon time Mr. Gladstone looked a different man. Ministers had come down in a special train, which awaited their return, timed to a certain hour.

<sup>1</sup> In the matter of dress Mr. Gladstone was unreliable, though always distinguished. But he could look better than anyone. I wrote to my mother, after hearing him present his first Home Rule Bill (1886) : “ He looked so nice with a yellow rose in his button-hole, that I felt he must be right.” On that occasion he wore a suit of the black broadcloth he often commended, which told admirably against the large expanse of shirt-front and white cuffs, which stood out nobly from the tight sleeves of his frock-coat.

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The luncheon was ample and protracted ; a good many Ministers had come down. Evidently things had gone well ; they dallied over their coffee and liqueurs with restored confidence and unclouded brows. Time went on. Mr. Gladstone suddenly looked at his watch ; he had been talking incessantly on all kinds of subjects. He rose from the table ; his mien was severe. "Gentlemen," he said, "we are bound in honour to the railway company," and off they went like boys for the holidays.

But now to come to Mr. Gladstone's more personal relations with the Queen. At that time they were supposed not to get on well together. I think it is true that the Queen, like Sir Henry Ponsonby, found Mr. Disraeli far easier to speak to than Mr. Gladstone, "who," to quote Sir Henry, "forces you into his groove, while Disraeli apparently follows yours—almost," he goes on to say, "with over-geniality." But, as it happened, the accidents of the roster led to my being in waiting three or four times when Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone paid visits to the Queen—that is, staying a night or two—and as far as I could see they were on quite easy terms. Mr. Gladstone certainly did most of the talking, and I remember upon one occasion his rather overdoing his love for the precise and accurate.<sup>1</sup> It was at dinner. The Queen was under the impression that she had seen some particular Welsh hill from Eaton when she

<sup>1</sup> In the autumn of 1887 I wrote to my mother from Mar Lodge : "This has been a very interesting week in my life, as Mr. Gladstone has been here all the time. He is certainly a Head-stone in the fabric of Humanity. Mr. Gladstone, above all, is a precisian, and one must be very careful in anything one says to him. It is curious how he examines and dissects the most trivial remark."

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visited the Duke of Westminster. Mr. Gladstone declared this to be geographically impossible, bringing all kinds of arguments to batter upon the fairy fabric of her recollections. She liked to think she had seen this hill. The regal brow was clouding. Had I been sitting next to him, I should have felt disposed to kick Mr. Gladstone under the table—not that this would have had the slightest effect. On he went till the Queen cut him short with a gentle inclination of the head : “ That will do.”

But what was remarked was that, with something of the same hardihood, Mr. Gladstone could always find subjects. Thus we were delivered from that reiteration of the same questions which Madame Campan observes seems inevitable with Royalty, and from the sterility of ideas which the same observer notices in Royalty and courtiers alike on public and private occasions. When Mr. Gladstone was there, there was indeed some adumbration of the possibilities of conversation.

Another evening their intercourse was almost racy. We had had some sort of concert, and refreshments of various kinds awaited the company at a buffet. Everybody was in a good humour at the concert being over and the prospect of going to bed. I heard Mr. Gladstone telling the Queen—he was drinking a large cup of strong tea—that he had just had a recent colloquy with his hatter. None of his hats fitted, as when he was in Office the bumps of his head enlarged. “ Oh, Mr. Gladstone,” the Queen said, “ I can’t believe that.” But he stuck to it, in the lighter ironical manner which he sometimes resorted to and at times excelled in.

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But we had evenings of another kind at Windsor.

One of these was devoted to a servants' ball, to which the ladies and gentlemen of the Household were invited, and which the Queen herself attended. Mr. John Brown acted as Master of the Ceremonies in the evening tartan of the Stuarts. The Queen, a terpsichore of the first order in her younger days—at least, so Mr. Strachey tells us—followed the evolutions of the dancers with a benevolent but critical eye. Deference was paid to the Highland character and preferences of Mistress and Household. We had what seemed to me incessant reels, Highland schottisches, and a complicated and sustained measure called "The Flowers of Edinburgh." Even with proficiency this dance requires constant attention, if not actual presence of mind, to be in the right place at the right moment—anyhow more than I possessed in the mazy labyrinth. I was suddenly impelled almost into the Queen's lap with a push in the back and a "Where are you coming to?" It was Mr. John Brown, exercising his legitimate office as M.C. After a good many Caledonians, Mr. Brown came to ask the Queen, "Now, what's your Majesty for?" Mindful of her English subjects, the Queen suggested a country dance. This did not find favour. "A country dance," he repeated, turning angrily on his heels. However, we were then told to select our partners for "Sir Roger de Coverley." To my regret, I had no personal acquaintance with Mr. Brown, but my valet often told me of pleasant evenings in his company. Storr appeared to be a favourite and Mr. Brown invited him to

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his room, where, over whisky and tobacco, they went into committee on the state of the nation.

Mr. Strachey gives a page or two to the permanence of the Prince Consort's influence in minor matters. He revives the gossip, which even in my time nobody believed, of the Prince's clothes being laid out and a hot-water can supplied in his dressing-room every evening. I personally do not believe a word of this. But in some ways his habits held good; for instance, in the shooting. In the shooting season, the Lord-in-Waiting was often invited by Prince Christian, but we only shot for three hours, from eleven to two. This was the Prince Consort's rule, who held that enough time had been given to relaxation. The rabbit-shooting in the Park was capital fun. Everton, the head-keeper, in green velvet and gold and corduroy, worked a team of ten or fifteen heavy lemon-and-white Clumbers, a survival of Georgian days. They got a good deal in the way, but looked well in the open woods about Cranbourne Tower. Everton worked them with an old-fashioned carter's whip, also, I should imagine, Georgian. He brandished it and cracked it round his head, apparently for no particular reason, frequent castigations of delinquents being carried on with a dog-whip by one of his satellites in the usual way. Her Majesty supplied one with cartridges, and one was not allowed to tip the keepers. This was all to the good. "The bag," I wrote to my mother, "is always kept a secret from her, a curious piece of etiquette." That day we had shot six hundred rabbits and two hundred pheasants.

This is curious, but I attribute it again to the

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severe and earnest air of duty and service which the Prince Consort, after the first few years of married life, generated in the Royal Household. Amusements in moderation were approved, but they were not to be talked about as part of their everyday life. In the same way, I was told that my hunting from Windsor when in Waiting would be viewed with disfavour. It was for the same reason—that a day's hunting took up more time than should be devoted by a Knight of the Round Table to relaxation. There was, however, the more natural explanation of a Lord-in-Waiting in the '50's getting himself and his horse cast—a Royal horse it was, too—in a Berkshire ditch. The Lord-in-Waiting had to get home in a gig, and found that he had missed an unexpected audience, summoned by Her Majesty in view of an international crisis. I much regretted this unfortunate accident, and, indeed, seriously considered trying to get things put right. However, I was dissuaded by joint representations from the veterans of the Household, whose respect for institutions of this kind was unbounded.

*Impressions and Memories.* 1927.

## IV

### SACHEVERELL SITWELL

#### Miss Morgan

[Sacheverell Sitwell, born, according to *Who's Who*, towards 1900, is the youngest of the celebrated Sitwell trio of authors. "The Sitwells," wrote Arnold Bennett, "live in a world of perception of their own, extraordinarily, insultingly, different from anybody's else." Sacheverell, who has made a special study of the painting, architecture, and music of Italy and Spain during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, shows remarkable ability in reproducing in vivid fashion the spirit and atmosphere of those bygone days. In his autobiographical fantasia, *All Summer in a Day*, with its fascinating recall of some of the experiences of his childhood in Scarborough and northern Derbyshire, he showed the same faculty of revivifying the past, and the work definitely established him as a master of prose.]

I SUPPOSE every one has some friend whom they always remember with white hair, whose hair must have gone white when they were quite young, and whose precise age must be, therefore, in default of any exact information, a subject of conjecture. This is easy enough for the experience of one generation, but Miss Morgan had been the friend of my grandmother; they had been friends for thirty-five years when I remember her, and my grandmother did not know her age and would not

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discuss it, and knew nothing of her history, and was too loyal to her to mention what there was of mystery in it to others.

She had first appeared thirty-five years ago when my father was a young boy, and then she had this same white hair, and seemed neither younger nor older than she would do to-day, when I had rung the door-bell and she came downstairs to open it.

My grandmother, who was bitten with that mania for home industries characteristic of the "seventies" of the last century, had first met Miss Morgan at Cannes in the studio of a French artist who had perfected a particularly horrid new trap for the "artistic" in the shape of Cloisonné pottery. Every year there had to be some new invention of the kind—the tracing of ferns with sand upon specially prepared cloth, a system of pen-painting, or anything of an inutility and violence of design appropriate to the new flowers that were produced every year, for hardly a season went by that was not made memorable by a calceolaria, a lobelia, or some strident, hairy, and caustic product of the East Indies adapted and still further intensified for greenhouse use.

That particular year, as I say, it was Cloisonné pottery. The inventor, as also his pupil, Miss Morgan, had worked in the factory which produced the blue china cupids and vases so beloved in the "sixties," the name of which factory—it was in the South of France somewhere near Cannes—I transcribe as nearly as it was pronounced—Valérie—though I happen to know that it was spelt entirely different from this, and have

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never, since I was ten and stumbled upon this information, been able to find out any more about it or how the name was really spelt.

Even as long ago as that it is apparent that Miss Morgan was something of a mystery, for when my grandmother met her in that "artist's atelier" there is no doubt that her condition of life was but little removed from starvation. She had been stranded on the Riviera through all the heat of summer, and this was but the beginning of a new season before business had started again. When, therefore, it was suggested that she should come to England and start the industry there, even her employer was delighted at the thought of these missionary labours, and the whole project was arranged almost as soon as discussed.

I gather that as the season wore on business went better, and with this increase in confidence the Frenchman became tiresome, perhaps jealous of her plates that were better than his, and so when the time came for her to leave they dissolved partnership without much regret.

So she came to this seaside town, and had been there ever since.

Miss Morgan cannot have been more than four and a half feet high, and her appearance was one of the most remarkable I have ever had the good fortune to see. She had, as I have said, white hair, and this grew in a series of little tight curls upon her head, while her face was of a dazzling whiteness, and she had extraordinarily good features of the particular sort that are enhanced and look their best above a stock, and this, or some form of a silk handkerchief, tied round her neck, she always wore. I can't describe her kind

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of dress, but it was always covered with a white smock, which associated her in one's mind with some kind of benevolent activity, not hospital work, for there were none of those dreadful anæsthetic smells about her.

We used to go up two flights of stairs, passing on the way the first-floor sitting-room, which was put to other uses. At about this point memories of what the house looked like begin to take their place in my mind.

The staircase walls had a lot of her plates hung upon them, and these were decorated chiefly with paintings of birds ; for instance, there was a china plaque on the landing painted with two ravens, or perhaps it was one raven and a hooded grey crow with it, and these bore a strange likeness to Gladstone and Disraeli. Both birds were on one flowering branch of a tree and were in a kind of Japanese-Riviera convention, which even in the days that I first remember must have been forty years old. Then there were plates of the regular Cloisonné order decorated with strapwork and fretwork, often in white or yellow upon a mulberry ground, very heavy in design and rather like an open jam tart, with the jam showing between strips of pastry.

At the top one left hat or coat upon one of two chairs on either side of a small table, and went to the right-hand side into the drawing-room. What loveliness lay round one, and how terrible to think it has been dispersed under the hammer of the auctioneer less than two years before the time I write this !

The whole of this room owed its decoration to Miss Morgan. On first taking the house many

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years before, she had procured a pair of steps and frescoed the top part of the walls all round the room with blue ribbons tied in bows, and with a kind of running fire of roses between these blue, silken supports. Below this, and covering the whole of the lower part of the wall, there was embroidery by her—again roses, on a cream or vellum-coloured ground. The curtains were made of material she had embroidered ; the furniture, chairs, and cupboards were painted by her in a clever imitation of inlay that made you run your fingers along where the edges of the inlay should have been, to see whether it was true or not. The tablecloths and chair-covers she had made, and, of course, there were some plates and vases by her hand upon mantelpiece and shelves.

The bow-window had elaborate window-boxes arranged with a whole shelf of *hors d'œuvre* to attract sparrows, finches, tits, or what other small birds there were about, and on a table just near to the window were three or four miniature greenhouses filled with dwarf cactuses, some of which even flowered occasionally under her encouragement.

I hope it is now manifest how many activities she had, how many interests to divide time and give her life point. These were not nearly all of them ; but the others must be developed later when occasion arises.

Just at this moment it was tea-time. Tea mixed with green Pekoe out of a beautiful tortoise-shell box, plates of two or three different kinds of bread, and a jam made by her out of vegetable marrow, and tasting better than the most delicious marmalade. Also two plates of chocolate biscuits,

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and some tea-cakes, which had formed themselves under her instigation into a sandwich for a layer of Demerara sugar, cooked into a kind of liquid toffee and yet preserving its marvellous crunch under the teeth, a sound like some one walking on the sand of a desert island, romantically conjured up for one by the very name—Demerara. Even the tea was not what one was used to ; since she mixed, as I have said, a teaspoonful of orange or green Pekoe with it, and this gave it a romantic zest so that one felt on one's travels when drinking it.

But these preparations—I had only just sat down—were interrupted by a strangely familiar voice, followed in a second by another ghostly avocation of well-known tones, both these disturbances coming from a corner of the room behind the door. A cage stood on a table there, and in this lived a “Minah” bird—a large, black, glossy creature from the Indies, and by far the most accomplished talker and mimic that I have ever met among its bird rivals. It knew all our voices, and hearing me talking had at once reproduced first my father and then my mother. I do not want this bird to assume the proportionate character of the raven in *Barnaby Rudge*, and so I say no more about it here, except that all through tea we may imagine its voice breaking in from time to time and always at an appropriate context or an awkward silence, while it made little plucking, quill-like noises moving from perch to perch.

I suppose that at the time I am talking of she knew practically every one that I had ever heard of or seen. She used to come and spend the summer with us in Derbyshire, and therefore all

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possible topics of conversation were common to us both, and it was hard for one of us to get out of contact with the other.

I have said that her house was like the prow of a ship, and certainly from this vantage-point we enjoyed a mental as well as a physical panorama of what lay round and below us. Miss Morgan and Colonel Fantock, between them, knew all there was to be known of fact, or fiction, concerning any one whose name you might mention. But even gossip on so portentous a scale as was here possible one must not allow to obscure other issues.

Very soon we shall all be left to ourselves—our generation, I mean. Therefore if a contact with even the past of twenty years ago is interesting, how much more so something of such antiquity as this turned out to be in the end, for until she died two years ago none of us knew her age.

She always told us that she had been born during the Crimean War, producing in evidence of this a story about her having been left in charge of an uncle while her father went to the war, and of how she was so inextricably confused with her uncle's daughter of just the same age as herself that identification became impossible, and her father being killed before long she had, perforce, to be brought up as an alternative and pendant to the other child, there being nothing better than a presumption to give her the authority in thinking she was who she gave herself out to be and not her own cousin, instead, or as well.

But even in the days I am speaking of, this date for her birth was most obviously an exaggeration in her favour, and later it became apparent that

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so long ago as the year she said she was born, she was grown up and living in Paris, in the earliest days of Napoleon III. She had, in fact, lopped off one whole generation from her age in an attempt to be young for us, since I really do not believe that vanity had much share in this diminishment of her years.

Her mind was of a childish stature. She derived an equal amount of pleasure from fine pieces of china, from a picture by Watteau or Boucher, and from a tin-enamelled biscuit-box. This want of discrimination was most obviously, therefore, to her material advantage, for she could be as happy on a shilling as on a hundred pounds.

The amount of childishness and natural youth in her composition was balanced by all the elements in her that took one right away from the present with its trams and cheap sweet-shops into a kind of Dickensian antiquity. It is sad to think that what seemed, then, the immortal and live-long present has changed into something far off and intangible with as much of legend clinging to its rags and clouts as was to be found in Miss Morgan's mythology of her own youth.

Of this, with all its details, she was not sparing to us. The frondage of her improbable and fantastic family tree shone like a green aura about her little figure as she moved, duster in hand, from treasure to treasure round the room. She would pull out a plate of green apples, or take from the same cupboard a chocolate cake out of a tin box, both of these being supplements, and quite unnecessary they were, to the many plates of cakes and biscuits upon the table. Then, perhaps, she would move to the window and be greeted by a

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loud chirping from the tits and chaffinches that were feeding there. A coconut or two was threaded from a nail in the woodwork and dangled in the wind, clashing against the green, summer paint with regular and rhythmical beat, so that sitting there in the sun and falling into an afternoon stupor the clash of those wooden pates broke in upon one's thoughts like a vague but undeniable Eastern music. The coconuts were swaying against their own tufted leaves, and just as these threaded skulls that Miss Morgan had bought from a barrow were climbed into and devoured by the tits and chaffinches, so were these on their native trees lifted by some agency of sun or wind, lifted, and swung lazily but firmly against the flat and nest-like top of the palm from which they depended. To this kind of summons by drum some savages were climbing the straight stems by means of a piece of bark-cord, the ends of which they held in either hand, while they leaned out their bodies as far as possible from the stem, pressing out with both feet, and at the same time lifting the cord a rung or two higher up the tree, while they moved their feet along in an alternate motion to the noose they held. Bending out their bodies like a bow from the stem, so as to keep themselves where they had climbed to, they would reach out and pick the fruit and then go a little higher, breaking through the outer leaves and so find themselves upon the flat, nest-like summit where they would sit like so many stylites, hammering in the rind with a shell-knife and drinking the milk they had taken so much trouble to procure. There would be two or three palms, each with its occupant, riding, in this peculiar fashion,

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down the sunset wind, and falling from those gourds of milk, and from the cradle-like movement of their perches into the identical stupor to that in which I found myself sitting in an armchair in the hot cage of sun which Miss Morgan's bow-window turned to during the late afternoon.

I began again to listen to what she was saying, though even now there would be a little flutter of wings against the sun, or a faint bashing of a coco-nut upon wood as the weight of some small bird made it move against the window-frame. The sun went conveniently behind a cloud, as on a Monday morning you can see a housewife hidden at her work behind an apron or some other piece of linen hanging from the strings in her backyard, and this very change in the day's fire, this sudden and momentary falling-in of its coals, keyed down and stilled my thoughts so that I was back once more in her direct focus, almost, I might say, within what I described as the green aura of her improbable and fantastic mythology.

*All Summer in a Day.* 1926.

## V

H. W. NEVINSON

## M. Poincaré and the Ruhr

[In Mr. H. W. Nevinson we have the supreme knight errant of the modern world. It has been the lot of few individuals to enjoy so varied and so adventurous a life, or to have had the opportunities of fighting for their conception of the right, as he has. As a war correspondent, or as a journalist engaged on special missions, he has always fearlessly expressed his opinions on people and events ; and he has now given us the opportunity of enjoying the story of the "chances and changes" of his eventful life in a series of revealing autobiographies.]

I HAVE often wondered which man has most nearly reached the utmost height of human happiness. Sometimes I have inclined to fix on one, sometimes on another—a great composer conducting his own symphony, a great dramatist witnessing his own drama, a great architect watching his temple rise, a great scientist discovering the cause of malaria or exploring the origins of mankind. But after long hesitation I have concluded that the man who has really been the happiest in all human history was M. Poincaré during the year 1923. Happiness lies in the fulfilment of function, the conquest of difficulties, the satisfaction of desire. M. Poincaré's function was statecraft, which he

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fulfilled ; his difficulty was England, which he overcame ; his desire was the ruin of Germany, which he accomplished. When at the end of that year he rested from his labours and his works followed him, was ever happiness to be compared with his ?

From the first, fate smiled upon his purpose. Early in 1922 he had succeeded M. Briand as Premier and Foreign Secretary. Throughout that year England was much occupied with her own affairs and her Government's failures. Largely owing to Mr. Lloyd George's entire ignorance of the relative fighting powers of Greeks and Turks —an ignorance which any one who had been present with Greeks and Turks in war-time could instantly have dispelled—the ramshackle Greek armies had been driven from Asia Minor with overwhelming loss, followed by the hideous massacre at Smyrna (September 1922). The power of Turkey, which Allenby seemed to have overthrown, revived so strongly that war with England might well have resulted but for the military and diplomatic skill of General Harington in the autumn of the year, supported by vigorous opposition at home and in the Dominions. Our Coalition Government broke, and a General Election returned Mr. Bonar Law as Prime Minister under a pledge of "tranquillity." On the Reparations Commission, set up by Versailles with almost absolute powers over German finance and economic life, France held the Chairmanship and, with the backing of Belgium, a steady majority. No account was taken of the disagreement or abstention of Sir John Bradbury, the British representative upon the Commission. The German offers of

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free labour and material for restoring the devastated regions in Northern France were rejected under the influence of the French contractors, who naturally wished to retain the lucrative jobs in their own hands. From the middle of the year, when an International Conference on reparations broke down owing to the French opposition to all compromise, M. Poincaré began repeating his dogma that only by the occupation of the Ruhr could reparations be secured and the "will to pay" be enforced upon the German mind.

In the last week of December 1922, the Reparations Commission (the British representative dissenting) reported "voluntary default" in German deliveries of timber, paving stone, and a small percentage of coal. The French Iron-masters' Association (*Comité des Forges*) redoubled their insistence upon the Ruhr occupation, because by the hoped-for extra supply of free coal and coke, they could crush German rivalry and destroy the competition of English coal and iron, which, owing to the free supplies of reparations, were already suffering in the same manner as British shipbuilding. That process had begun which led the *Times* to write later on (November 28, 1923), that "the French can drive British steel and metallurgical products out of every neutral market, and swamp our home markets." Yet it was not merely the impending loss to vital branches of our commerce and manufacture that roused the opposition of all parties in the country, and every important newspaper but one or perhaps two. It was against the illegality and unwisdom of the Poincaré policy that the nation protested, and if at that time the Prime Minister had spoken

with the energy displayed by Lord Curzon as Foreign Secretary in the following summer (especially in the Note to France and Belgium, of 11th August), it is possible that the crime would never have been perpetrated.

Unhappily, Mr. Bonar Law, pledged to tranquillity, and already perhaps conscious of the physical weakness that led to his resignation in the following May, was not strong enough to overcome M. Poincaré's determination at the Paris Conference of the first week in January. The French Premier, almost without a thought, rejected his suggestions of a moratorium and definite fixture of the reparation sum, and then poor Mr. Bonar Law retired to London with a feeble promise of "benevolent neutrality" towards an action which he himself and nearly the whole of his country condemned. It was as though a villa resident should say, "I really disapprove of your intention to kill our neighbour, though I did have a serious quarrel with him lately. But if you insist upon the murder please go ahead. You may climb my garden wall to do it, and I will look the other way." So M. Poincaré accepted the "*rupture cordiale*" with indifferent gratitude, climbed the garden wall, and committed the murder at leisure.

His hands being free, M. Poincaré wisely struck quickly and hard. On 11th January the French invaded the Ruhr with overwhelming military force—machine guns, infantry, cavalry, armoured cars, followed by tanks, heavy guns, aeroplanes, and all other equipment of war. The pretence was the protection of certain technicians, engineers, and customs officers there engaged in perfect

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safety, but M. Poincaré's object was no such petty and transient an affair. His desire was the ruin and depopulation of a country already defeated, nearly ruined, and reduced to extremity by war, sickness, and famine. While the old enemy was weak, disarmed, poverty-stricken, and isolated, he resolved to strike once more and make an end. Happy in opportunity, he saw that no one was able or willing to interrupt his purpose. America gathered her skirts about her, threatened to withdraw her troops from the Rhine, and did so at once. There was a party in England which called upon our Government to do the same, but, fortunately, better counsels prevailed, and the small British force remained, standing in the opinion of all Germans as their one hope of justice. Otherwise, M. Poincaré felt himself able to follow out the fine old-fashioned way of dealing with an enemy when he is down, and by attacking a helpless people in peace-time with all the resources of the greatest army in the world, he conceived himself able to accomplish his desire with extraordinary and rapid success. I often wished that I had been a French politician myself, so that I might rejoice in the spectacle I then witnessed. But my part was the humbler one of increasing M. Poincaré's happiness by recording the extent of his triumph.

At the end of January I was sent to write upon the conditions in great cities of Germany outside the Ruhr, where the *Manchester Guardian* had an excellent correspondent in F. A. Voigt, a pupil of J. C. Hamilton in journalism. Accordingly I went straight to Berlin. I had not been there since the day when war was declared and

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interminable crowds swarmed to and fro "Unter den Linden," shouting "*Die Wacht am Rhein*," "*Deutschland über Alles*," and other national songs or cheering the Kaiser, the Crown Prince, and every knot of soldiers that passed to the front in the new field-grey uniform. I now remembered that on that occasion, after I had been dragged to the chief Police Office amid the onslaughts of a violently hostile crowd, a colleague of mine, pointing to the Brandenburger Tor, whispered to me, "Some day we shall enter there as victors!" It was a daring prophecy, but now, as I entered that gateway again, I suppose I could have called myself a victor if I had cared to be mean, inhuman, and ridiculous.

The city lay before me as an example of human mutability and the world's transitory glories. No shouting crowds, no national songs; not a thought of the Kaiser or the Crown Prince; poverty and hunger in place of prosperity, destitution in place of enjoyment; Chancellor, generals and admirals, all gone; not a soldier to be seen; a military nation disarmed; an industrious and inventive people lying passive at the so-called mercy of an implacable enemy—I do not know where in the world's history one could find a parallel to so overwhelming an overthrow, so complete a reversal of fortune, and in so short a time.

As in Vienna, the professional classes were ruined. When people are hungry, they cease to pay for art or music or learning or law or religion or even medicine. Food is the only thing that counts. Here, too, as there, thrift had become a thoughtless imprudence, and "independent incomes" had faded to nothingness. It was pitiful,

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wherever I went among German cities, to hear of distinguished, hard-working, and highly educated men and women living as long as they could by selling their bits of possessions, and, when the last was sold, turning on the gas or cutting their throats. One day I invited an eminent man who had been German Ambassador in various Courts to lunch at my little hotel, and prepared the very best that expenditure could supply—thick soup, real beef-steak, potatoes, real jam, real bread and butter, beer up to strength, and coffee—real coffee. His purely physical enjoyment of the food and drink was enough to make the angels weep. It was pitiful to think that the hand of Joy was already at his lips bidding adieu, and that within a few hours all that ecstasy would become but a fading remembrance.

There were four of us, and I suppose the entertainment cost nearly half a crown a head. At that time (February 1923) the mark had only begun its abysmal descent, but the relation of wages to food prices was the only thing that mattered, or that ever matters much. In the factories of Berlin and other cities I found wages running from 14,000 to 36,000 marks a week. Where coal mines had not suspended work as “passive resistance,” the average was about 24,000. A builder who used to get 40 gold marks a week (£2) now got 48,000, worth about 6 shillings. A printer gave the same amounts. A tram-conductor put the purchase value of his wages at 4 gold marks a week. Margarine was everywhere taken as the standard of value, and the price of margarine shifted around 6,000 marks a pound. A German miner thus had to work a day and a

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half to earn a pound of margarine, which an English miner might have earned in half an hour. Rationed bread was 650 marks the 4-lb. loaf, but only one loaf a week was allowed per family, and unrationed bread, which at first cost 1,200 marks a loaf, was rising beyond calculation after the French invasion. Milk, being 750 marks the litre, was beyond hope ; sausage was almost as remote, and fresh meat no worker ever thought of. Coal cost 60 marks the pound, and people stayed in bed to keep warm. In the workpeople's houses I found no sheets, and hardly any bedclothes or underclothing. Boots cost 35,000 marks a pair, and children sold their shoes and went barefoot. Children of eight or nine looked like children of five or six, and tuberculosis was rapidly increasing. German economists told me the country might support forty millions on her own resources, without much industrial or foreign trade. The surplus of twenty-five millions was being exterminated ; the total population would thus sink below the level of the French, and a vital point in M. Poincaré's desires would be securely gained.

Hunger and wretchedness similarly prevailed in Leipzig, where I stayed on my way to Chemnitz, a centre of smallish industries, chiefly textile. There the women were working the "clocks" upon socks or stockings at two dozen a day for one-third of a pound of margarine, and stitching "fabric gloves" at about six pounds of margarine a week. The "fabric" of the gloves was made of cotton, wrought up to such a quality that any layman would have taken it for the finest doeskin. And, as so often happens, its excellence was its ruin ; for in the previous year (1st July), our

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Government had excluded the gloves by a high protective tariff, apparently because no English maker could rival their quality. Mr. Asquith had protested in the name of Free Trade and the people who actually wanted the better gloves, but Mr. Asquith was a Liberal and did not count.

Then from the hostile frontiers of what had once been friendly Bohemia, I turned back into the region of the Thüringenwald, so intimately familiar to me forty years before. It is always dangerous to revisit any scene after a long interval. It is sure to induce softening regrets and melancholy reflections ; all the worse if memory brings with it a sorrow's crown of sorrow. Yet I have heard people wish to return to this world many years after death, just to see how things are going on, or perhaps to feel what it is like to be forgotten. If they wish to try the experiment, it is not difficult. They need only have been at a University and have lived sixty years in all—quite common conditions. Let them return to the University after forty years and the thing is done. The generations of University life are so brief that after forty years one may look upon a world once known, with ten or twelve generations added. One has by that time become a blessed ghost, and can wander about, unknown and almost unseen. One peers into a world that is new, and yet comprehensible. Against a background of half-remembered associations, such as always throw a benign radiance over the past, one may watch the course of life still moving onward without a pause, and without one's presence. After all, the experience is really encouraging.

Nearly forty years had passed since I was a

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student in Jena, and, for the first time since then, I was visiting the scene again. Not a living creature remembered me, or even remembered the years that I was there. Except, perhaps, the withered old horse which contrived to crawl with me from the station to the Black Bear Hotel, where our gayest and most luxurious spirits used once to revel in beer. With his whitened eye, that ageing horse did seem to recognize a coeval ; for, in pity for his age, he alone had been spared when all his companions were sacrificed to the expense of fodder. But Haeckel had gone—the great Haeckel, Rector of the University, whose lectures I always attended, not that I knew anything about morphology, but simply in admiration of his fine personality and cheerful manner. The philosopher Liebmann had gone, to solve, as I hoped, those metaphysical problems that he failed to solve for me. The Professor of Literature, whose very name I had forgotten, had gone, except that some sentences of his admirable lectures on Goethe still lingered in my mind. Old Karl Zeiss, the great optician, had gone, and so had his son, to whom I once taught English ; though the Zeiss spirit lingered in the vast optical factory known throughout the world for the perfection of its lenses.

The genius of Zeiss and his partner, Ernest Abbe, who founded the semi-socialistic *Stiftung* for the benefit of their workmen and the whole town, had transformed the surroundings of the beautiful old place. Villas and model dwellings had spread far up the valleys and the familiar hills—the Fuchs Thurm, where we kindled the beacon fires on St. John's Eve ; the Forst, which it was thought an almost heroic exertion for

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students to climb ; the idyllic Ziegenhain village, famed for its "white beer" ; and the Landgrafen-berg, up which Napoleon marched his Grand Army of 85,000 men in the French invasion that preceded M. Poincaré's. The old grey bridge over the Saale, under which I used to shoot on timber rafts, had given place to a wide structure of yellow stone, and the little inn across the river, where Goethe wrote the "Erlkönig," was obscured. A large new building, also of yellow stone, had been added to the University, but the old building still served, as did an ancient house where I lodged as student.

In those days I never supposed I should some day come to lecture in the familiar University rooms ; but I had hardly arrived when the "Lector" in modern English invited me to speak to his students in my own tongue, and they appeared to understand all I said. Some of them were women, and there were no women students in my time, though Haeckel once told me of his difficulty in excluding a Russian woman who insisted upon studying medicine. Now there were about 500 women out of the 2,700 students, and most of them studied medicine. Of the men, the great majority took one branch or other of the vast subject called "Philosophy," which includes Natural Science. A good many studied Law, a good many Medicine. Only about seventy took Theology. In his opening soliloquy, Faust says with a sigh :

*"Habe nun, ach ! Philosophie,  
Juristerei und Medizin,  
Und leider auch Theologie  
Durchaus studiert, mit heissem Bemühn."*

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That “*leider*”—“More’s the pity!”—appeared to be an opinion shared by the students of to-day.

The student Clubs or Societies were still maintained, for to make a *Verein* is as natural to the Germans as making a committee is to the English. There were the Corps with their red, blue, or variegated caps, still practising duelling with the pointed foils, still forbidden by law, as it always was. But it was I who had the glory of introducing the first real football there, in place of a leather bag stuffed with straw; and at Weimar, ten miles away, it was I who introduced tennis. Both were practised with great success by the Jena students until the recent disasters reduced the whole country to poverty, and under the stress of poverty even the members of fashionable Corps were now working with their hands to pay the University expenses, small as those were. Nearly all worked in the Long Vacation, and most in Term-time besides—too exhausting a scheme of life, I thought, as in the American Universities, but likely to promote sympathy with working people. The majority of students were, of course, Nationalists, and their party had naturally increased since the French invasion had taught them that all the promises held out before the Armistice went for scraps of paper, and nothing but violence could avail in the world. At the same time, I was amazed to read placards on the University doors announcing meetings of the “Academic Democratic Workmen’s Union,” and even of the “German Pacifist Students’ Club!”

In Goethe’s Weimar, too, I walked once more hand in hand with the man who had been so long

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my master and intimate daily friend. As we visited again his simple Gartenhaus beside the wintry park, and watched the little Ilm still running dark and swift as when "many an immortal song" rose from its banks; gazed at the bronze statue of himself and his friend, standing with clasped hands in front of his old theatre, we continued to converse together, "as speaks one ghost to another ghost." I know the worst that can be said against Goethe—his diffusion of interest, his barren wastes of dullness, his lack of self-criticism, his frequent failure to conclude as he had begun. Never mind! He was a man after my own heart, and, unless I go all the way back to Socrates, I have not met another ghost with whom I so gladly consort.

In Weimar, too, I saw again the old dwelling-place of poor Herder, whose services to literature and thought I, in my youth, attempted, quite vainly, to recall. And in his church close by, I saw the huge private pew or box of the famous Grand Dukes, always empty now but still preserved as a symbol of transitory things. So was the Grand Ducal Schloss, in front of which no bodyguard now stood ready to form in line and present arms when the cry "Heraus!" preluded the approach of Grand Ducal blood. It was all encouraging, and yet one could not escape a certain sadness, as when one penetrates the tomb of an Egyptian queen.

More encouraging still was a vast working-men's meeting that I attended in Magdeburg. I had visited the ancient citadel, into the cells and barrack-rooms of which Versailles and the League of Nations had crammed wretched refugee families

from Posen and Upper Silesia. I had listened long to the hopes and fears of Oberpräsident Hörsting, who had risen from the labour of an ironsmith to the labour of governing the province. Then one evening I went to the Workmen's Hall to hear Graf Hellmuth von Gerlach, leader of the German Pacifists, as he still is (1928). He spoke well for over an hour, but more interesting to me was the strong protest of a veteran officer, who appealed to German feeling, German national pride, German history, and all that could move the German heart, never, never to attempt negotiations with the treacherous French again, but to endure passively in the sure and certain hope that German honour would at some time be vindicated by a resurrection. Graf von Gerlach, violently pacific, thereupon rushed at the speaker on the platform. The chairman, who had lost one arm in the war, dragged the ardent patriot back to his chair, and amid the wild shouting of the audience, he was hustled from the building. Rather needlessly, as I thought, for he was but a good old officer, all of the good old time. From Hamburg, to which many directors of the Ruhr mines and factories had removed so as to escape the violence and imprisonment by which the French hoped to break down the policy of passive resistance, I was obliged to return to London, where I could more freely congratulate M. Poincaré upon his success in bringing ruin upon his foes, as well as upon ourselves, who had been his friends.

*Last Changes, Last Chances.* 1928.

## VI

## ROBERT GRAVES

## T. E. Lawrence and Thomas Hardy

[Robert Graves is one of the many young Englishmen whose lives were crossed by the catastrophe of the War. He was born in 1895, and was educated at Charterhouse ; but his education was interrupted by his service in France with the Royal Welch Fusiliers. Here he was severely wounded, and came home to be a student at Oxford. Then for a time he was Professor of English Literature in the Egyptian University. Much of the story of his childhood and of those days is faithfully recorded in his *Good-bye to all That*. He has published several volumes of poems, essays, and novels, and is a leading representative of a group of young writers who have revolted against the somewhat facile optimism and pretty-pretty stylism of some of the pre-war writers. The experiments of this group are undoubtedly of the greatest importance to the future of English literature.]

I MET T. E. Lawrence first at a guest-night at 'All Souls'. Lawrence had just been given a college fellowship, and it was the first time for many years that he had worn evening dress. The restlessness of his eyes was the first thing about him I noticed. He told me that he had read my poems in Egypt during one of his flying visits from Arabia ; he and my brother Philip had been together in the Intelligence Department at Cairo,

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before his part in the Arab revolt had begun, working out the Turkish order of battle. I knew nothing about his organization of the Arab revolt, his exploits and sufferings in the desert, and his final entry into Damascus. He was merely, to me, a fellow-soldier who had come back to Oxford for a rest after the war. But I felt a sudden extraordinary sympathy with him. Later, when I was told that every one was fascinated by Lawrence, I tried to dismiss this feeling as extravagant. But it remained. Between lectures at Oxford I now often visited Lawrence at All Souls'. Though he never drank himself, he used always to send his scout for a silver goblet of audit ale for me. Audit ale was brewed in the college ; it was as soft as barley-water but of great strength. (A prince once came down to Oxford to open a new museum and lunched at All Souls' before the ceremony ; the mildness of the audit ale deceived him—he took it for lager—and he had to be taken back to the station in a cab with the blinds drawn.) Nancy and I lunched in Lawrence's rooms once with Vachel Lindsay, the American poet, and his mother. Mrs. Lindsay was from Springfield, Illinois, and, like her son, a prominent member of the Illinois Anti-Saloon League. When Lawrence told his scout that Mr. Lindsay, though a poet, was an Anti-Saloon Leaguer, he was scandalized and asked Lawrence's permission to lay on Lindsay's place a copy of verses composed in 1661 by a fellow of the college. One stanza was :

The poet divine that cannot reach wine,  
Because that his money doth many times faile,  
Will hit on the vein to make a good strain,  
If he be but inspired with a pot of good ale.

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Mrs. Lindsay had been warned by friends to comment on nothing unusual that she met at Oxford. Lawrence had brought out the college gold service in her honour and this she took to be the ordinary thing at a university luncheon-party.

His rooms were dark and oak-panelled. A large table and a desk were the principal furniture. And there were two heavy leather chairs, simply acquired. An American oil financier had come in suddenly one day when I was visiting T. E. and said : "I am here from the States, Colonel Lawrence, to ask you a single question. You are the only man who will answer it honestly. Do Middle-Eastern conditions justify my putting any money in South Arabian oil ?" Lawrence, without rising, simply answered : "No." "That's all I wanted to know ; it was worth coming for that. Thank you, and good-day !" In his brief glance about the room he had found something missing ; on his way home through London he chose the chairs and had them sent to Lawrence with his card. Other things in the room were pictures, including Augustus John's portrait of Feisul, which Lawrence, I believe, bought from John with the diamond which he had worn as a mark of honour in his Arab head-dress ; his books, including a Kelmscott *Chaucer* ; three prayer-rugs, the gift of Arab leaders who had fought with him, one of them with the sheen on the nap made with crushed lapis-lazuli ; a station bell from the Hedjaz railway ; and on the mantelpiece a four-thousand-year-old toy, a clay soldier on horseback from a child's grave at Carchemish, where Lawrence was digging before the war.

We talked most about poetry. I was working

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at a book of poems which appeared later under the title of *The Pier-Glass*. They were poems that reflected my haunted condition ; the *Country Sentiment* mood was breaking down. Lawrence made a number of suggestions for improving these poems and I adopted most of them. He told me of two or three of his schemes for brightening All Souls' and Oxford generally. One was for improving the turf in the quadrangle, which he said was in a disgraceful condition, nearly rotting away ; he had suggested at a college meeting that it should be manured or treated in some way or other, but no action had been taken. He now said that he was going to plant mushrooms on it, so that they would have to re-turf it altogether. He consulted a mushroom expert in town, but found that it was difficult to make spawn grow. He would have persisted if he had not been called away about this time to help Winston Churchill with the Middle-Eastern settlement. Another scheme, in which I was to have helped, was to steal the Magdalen College deer. He was going to drive them into the small inner quadrangle of All Souls', having persuaded the college to reply, when Magdalen protested and asked for its deer back, that it was the All Souls' herd and had been pastured there from time immemorial. Great things were expected of this raid. It fell through for the same reason as the other. But a successful strike of college servants for better pay and hours was said to have been engineered by Lawrence.

I took no part in undergraduate life, seldom visiting my college except to draw my Government grant and exhibition money ; I refused to pay the college games' subscription, having little interest

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in St. John's and being unfit for games myself. Most of my friends were at Balliol and Queen's, and in any case Wadham had a prior claim on my loyalty. I spent as little time as possible away from Boar's Hill. At this time I had little to do with the children ; they were in the hands of Nancy and the nurse—the nurse now also did the cooking and housework for us. Nancy felt that she wanted some activity besides drawing, though she could not decide what. One evening in the middle of the long vacation she suddenly said : "I must get away somewhere out of this for a change. Let's go off on bicycles somewhere." We packed a few things and rode off in the general direction of Devonshire. The nights were coldish and we had not brought blankets. We found that the best way was to bicycle by night and sleep by day. We went over Salisbury Plain past several deserted army camps ; they had a ghostly look. There was accommodation in these camps for a million men, the number of men killed in the Imperial Forces during the war. We found ourselves near Dorchester, so we turned in there to visit Thomas Hardy, whom we had met not long before when he came up to Oxford to get his honorary doctor's degree. We found him active and gay, with none of the aphasia and wandering of attention that we had noticed in him at Oxford.

I wrote out a record of the conversation we had with him. He welcomed us as representatives of the post-war generation. He said that he lived such a quiet life at Dorchester that he feared he was altogether behind the times. He wanted, for instance, to know whether we had any sympathy

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with the Bolshevik régime, and whether he could trust the *Morning Post's* account of the Red Terror. Then he was interested in Nancy's hair, which she wore short, in advance of the fashion, and in her keeping her own name. His comment on the name question was : "Why, you *are* old-fashioned. I knew an old couple here sixty years ago that did the same. The woman was called Nanny Priddle (descendant of an ancient family, the Paradelles, long decayed into peasantry), and she would never change her name either." Then he wanted to know why I no longer used my army rank. I said it was because I was no longer soldiering. "But you have a right to it ; I would certainly keep my rank if I had one. I should be very proud to be called Captain Hardy."

He told us that he was now engaged in restoring a Norman font in a church near by. He had only the bowl to work upon, but enjoyed doing a bit of his old work again. Nancy mentioned that we had not baptized our children. He was interested, but not scandalized, remarking that his old mother had always said of baptism that at any rate there was no harm in it, and that she would not like her children to blame her in after-life for leaving any duty to them undone. "I have usually found that what my old mother said was right." He said that to his mind the new generation of clergymen were very much better men than the last. . . . Though he now only went to church three times a year—one visit to each of the three neighbouring churches—he could not forget that the church was in the old days the centre of all the musical, literary, and artistic education in the country village. He talked about

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the old string orchestras in Wessex churches, in one of which his father, grandfather, and he himself had taken part ; he regretted their disappearance. He told us that the clergyman who appears as old St. Clair in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was the man who protested to the War Office about the Sunday brass-band performances at the Dorchester Barracks, and was the cause of headquarters no longer being sent to this once very popular station.

We had tea in the drawing-room, which, like the rest of the house, was crowded with furniture and ornaments. Hardy had an affection for old possessions, and Mrs. Hardy was too fond to suggest that anything at all should be removed. Hardy, his cup of tea in hand, began making jokes about bishops at the Athenæum Club and imitating their episcopal tones when they ordered : "China tea and a little bread and butter (Yes, my lord !)." Apparently he considered bishops were fair game. He was soon censuring Sir Edmund Gosse, who had recently stayed with them, for a breach of good taste in imitating his old friend, Henry James, eating soup. Loyalty to his friends was always a passion with Hardy.

After tea we went into the garden, and Hardy asked to see some of my recent poems. I showed him one, and he asked if he might make some suggestions. He objected to the phrase the "scent of thyme," which he said was one of the *clichés* which the poets of his generation studied to avoid. I replied that they had avoided it so well that it could be used again now without offence, and he withdrew the objection. He asked whether I wrote easily, and I said that this poem

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was in its sixth draft and would probably be finished in two more. "Why," he said, "I have never in my life taken more than three, or perhaps four, drafts for a poem. I am afraid of it losing its freshness." He said that he had been able to sit down and write novels by time-table, but that poetry was always accidental, and perhaps it was for that reason that he prized it more highly.

He spoke disparagingly of his novels, though admitting that there were chapters in them that he had enjoyed writing. We were walking round the garden, and Hardy paused at a spot near the greenhouse. He said that he had once been pruning a tree here when an idea suddenly had come into his head for a story, the best story that he had ever thought of. It came complete with characters, setting, and even some of the dialogue. But as he had no pencil and paper with him, and was anxious to finish pruning the tree before it rained, he had let it go. By the time he sat down to recall it, all was utterly gone. "Always carry a pencil and paper," he said. He added, "Of course, even if I could remember that story now, I couldn't write it. I am past novel-writing. But I often wonder what it was."

At dinner that night he grew enthusiastic in praise of cider, which he had drunk since a boy, and which, he said, was the finest medicine he knew. I suggested that in the *Message to the American People*, which he had been asked to write, he might take the opportunity of recommending cider.

He began complaining of autograph-hunters and their persistence. He disliked leaving letters unanswered, and yet if he did not write these people pestered him the more ; he had been

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upset that morning by a letter from an autograph-friend which began :

Dear Mr. Hardy,—I am interested to know why the devil you don't reply to my request. . . .

He asked me for my advice, and was grateful for the suggestion that a mythical secretary should reply offering his autograph at one or two guineas, the amount to be sent to a hospital ("Swanage Children's Hospital," put in Hardy), which would forward a receipt.

He said that he regarded professional critics as parasites no less noxious than autograph-hunters, and wished the world rid of them. He also wished that he had not listened to them when he was a young man; on their advice he had cut out dialect-words from his early poems, though they had no exact synonyms to fit the context. And still the critics were plaguing him. One of them recently complained of a poem of his where he had written "*his shape smalled* in the distance." Now what in the world else could he have written? Hardy then laughed a little and said that once or twice recently he had looked up a word in the dictionary for fear of being again accused of coining, and had found it there right enough—only to read on and find that the sole authority quoted was himself in a half-forgotten novel! He talked of early literary influences, and said that he had none at all, for he did not come of literary stock. Then he corrected himself and said that a friend, a fellow-apprentice in the architect's office where he worked as a young man, used to lend him books. (His taste in literature was certainly most unexpected. Once when Lawrence had ventured to

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say something disparaging against Homer's *Iliad*, he protested: "Oh, but I admire the *Iliad* greatly. Why, it's in the *Marmion* class!" Lawrence could not at first believe that Hardy was not making a little joke.)

We went off the next day, but there was more talk at breakfast before we went. Hardy was at the critics again. He was complaining that they accused him of pessimism. One man had recently singled out as an example of gloom a poem he had written about a woman whose house was burned down on her wedding-night. "Of course it is a humorous piece," said Hardy, "and the man must have been thick-witted not to see that. When I read his criticism I went through my last collection of poems with a pencil, marking them S, N, and C, according as they were sad, neutral, or cheerful. I found them as nearly as possible in equal proportions; which nobody could call pessimism." In his opinion *vers libre* could come to nothing in England. "All we can do is to write on the old themes in the old styles, but try to do a little better than those who went before us." About his own poems he said that once they were written he cared very little what happened to them.

He told us of his work during the war, and said that he was glad to have been chairman of the Anti-Profiteering Committee, and to have succeeded in bringing a number of rascally Dorchester tradesmen to book. "It made me unpopular, of course," he said, "but it was a hundred times better than sitting on a military tribunal and sending young men to the war who did not want to go."

This was the last time we saw Hardy.

*Good-bye to All That.* 1929.

## VII

### EARL OF BALFOUR

#### At Eton and Cambridge

[Lord Balfour's name will always be prominent in the historical records of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He served as private secretary to his uncle, Lord Salisbury, at the Berlin Congress of 1878 ; he was an active servant of his country during the years of the Great War. He may, perhaps, be looked upon as the last prominent representative of that aristocratic type of politician who directed the fortunes of the nation, for better or worse, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The story of his enviable early education will be of interest to all who hold with Wordsworth that the child is father of the man.]

I WENT to Eton in September 1861, when I was just thirteen, and stayed there till I went to Cambridge soon after I was eighteen—important years in every boy's life, but not always very easy to describe. In my case, the difficulty arises mainly from the fact that at Eton I did nothing worth describing. I was neither very good nor very bad ; I distinguished myself neither in pupil-room nor in the playing-fields ; I was not a hero among my fellows, nor the subject of hopeful speculation among my teachers. I had, indeed, no difficulty in maintaining an average position among my contemporaries. But I had no great

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desire to do more ; and whether looked at from the scholastic or the athletic point of view, I was quite uninteresting.

These negative characteristics were, no doubt, due in some small measure to the physical causes which hampered me at Hoddesdon. Under doctor's orders I was excused early school ; I was not sufficiently robust to excel at football, too short-sighted to enjoy cricket ; and in those far-off days a boy, though he might be short-sighted, was not expected to wear spectacles, any more than, if cold, he was expected to wear a great-coat. Nor did he.

I cannot, however, flatter myself that the mediocrity of my scholastic career was due to physical disabilities. The fact is, that I had no gift for languages, no liking for grammar, and never acquired sufficient mastery of the classics to enjoy them as literature. I detested the weekly task of writing bad Latin Prose ; I detested even more the weekly task of composing yet worse Latin Verses. My absence from early school, when most of the "saying lessons" were taken, saved me much discomfort. Whether it deprived me of valuable training I know not. But I find it hard to believe that any kind of education would have given me a good verbal memory.

All this may seem like a criticism of the school disguised under a portrait of the scholar ; but it is not so. The system that prevailed in the early sixties of the last century was doubtless capable of improvement, and it has been improved. But then, as now, the communal life of Eton was in itself an education ; then, as now, the book knowledge which is supplied sufficed for those

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who were ready to learn ; and if there be any survivor of those distant years who attributes the ignorance of his old age to the deficiencies of his early training, he probably flatters himself, and does less than justice to his teachers. I, at least, cherish no such illusions ; and it is to Eton that every boy would go whose educational destiny was in my keeping.

It is not really inconsistent with this to admit that the most valuable things I learned during my years at Eton were not the things I was taught, and that in all probability a somewhat similar confession would be made by many of Eton's most faithful children. How indeed could it be otherwise ? To begin with, the system of large classes, inevitable in a large school, compels educational standardization, and limits the amount of special attention which can be paid to individual idiosyncrasies. No single method can be applied with equal advantage to all the raw material which has to be dealt with ; and the method actually employed probably showed at its worst when applied to a boy who, like myself, was by nature neither industrious nor persevering, who had no scholastic ambitions, who, though interested in many subjects and open to many kinds of intellectual appeal, could never find the least attraction in the beaten path by which so many in every generation have reached the highest levels of classical accomplishment. For this it would be absurd to blame the system, the more so as I doubt whether any teaching, however sympathetic, would have turned me into a finished scholar.

But if Eton, through my own deficiencies, failed

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to supply intellectual inspiration, it did not fail to supply opportunities ; and this, from my point of view, was perhaps even more important. We were not over-worked. The school routine was in no sense excessive ; and if a boy had tastes which led him beyond the prescribed curriculum, he could indulge them without discredit—if he would.

Now, I was fortunate in being born with the germs of many tastes ; I was still more fortunate in the wise way in which they were encouraged by my mother. The home influences were thus unusually propitious. I read, idly no doubt, but (for a boy) I read a good deal. There was no question here of lessons. No question of finishing a book because I had begun it ; or of mastering the tedious parts of a subject because there were other parts which had entertained me. This easy-going procedure, no doubt, had its demoralizing side. But this was somewhat mitigated by my mother's influence. She loved good literature ; she taught us to love it ; and because she never dogmatized, her guidance was irresistible.

It is, of course, impossible to catalogue the benefits she thus conferred on those of her children who were old enough to profit by them. But she performed one specific educational service in a manner so characteristic that it deserves to be noted. She taught us to read French and enjoy it. In those days the languages and literatures of the modern world were handed over for purposes of education to girls and governesses ; while boys and schoolmasters willingly contented themselves with Greek and Latin. There may have been many good reasons for this division of learning between the sexes, but the reasons usually as-

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signed were that, so far as girls were concerned, it was socially more useful to know how people talk to-day than how they wrote some two thousand years ago ; while as for boys, it was impossible to teach modern languages effectively at a public school, since a class taught by an Englishman would never learn the proper pronunciation, and if taught by foreigners would refuse to learn anything at all. Whether this dilemma was as formidable as it seems, I cannot say. But in my case, at least, its results were unfortunate. Through no fault of my teachers, I failed to master either Greek or Latin ; through no fault of my own, no other languages were ever taught me. French, German, Italian, and Spanish were ignored. English was supposed to come by nature—which in my case (as I am assured by quite competent critics) it has failed to do.

However this may be, the situation was one which my mother could not face with equanimity. She was herself a good French scholar and an ardent lover of French literature. Her daughters were being taught by governesses. What was to happen to her sons ? The expedient of interpolating between Eton and Cambridge an interval to be spent with an English crammer or in a French *pension* was, so far as I know, never contemplated. In any case, it would have come rather late. The obvious plan of having lessons in the holidays would have spoiled the holidays. The third alternative was to make a beginning without lessons, and this she accomplished with (I fear) much labour to herself, but great delight to her children. Her scheme was to take the most exciting French novel she could find, and then,

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the aid of translation, excisions, and explanations, to make her youthful audience grasp the general trend of the narrative, and ultimately, without much difficulty, to follow its details. She chose *Monte Cristo* for her first experiment ; and though the knowledge of French brought to our gathering by my brothers and myself must have been negligible, such were the merits of the book and such the skill of its interpreter, that we listened spellbound to the story, and almost forgot that we were being introduced to a new language.

So far as I was concerned, however, the most important single incident of these boyish years was of a much more trivial kind. One day my mother presented me with the posthumous volumes of Lord Macaulay's miscellaneous writings then recently published. Who is there, in these days, who would admit that at any period of his life his intellectual development had been profoundly stimulated by the writings of Lord Macaulay ? To be sure no one denies their brilliancy. But, says the critic, brilliancy is but a surface quality, and the antithetical glitter of their style cannot conceal an essential shallowness of insight, a congenital incapacity for philosophic speculation, which must always keep their author in the second rank of nineteenth-century writers. On this point I dare offer no opinion, if only because I am not an impartial judge. My personal feelings are too deeply concerned. For no sooner was I acquainted with these specimens of his writings, than I became his fascinated admirer. His style delighted me. I thought his dialectics irresistible. His gifts of narrative carried me away ; the things he wrote about invariably interested me ;

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in short, he supplied much of the mental nourishment I desired, in the exact form that best suited my very youthful appetite.

I think my mother was a little startled by this sudden outburst of idolatry. She was far too wise to belittle the idol; but she suggested other writers (for example, De Quincey, and, a little later, Sainte-Beuve) who might with advantage find a place in my pantheon of essayists. I profited by her advice, but Macaulay was not easily dethroned.

Nor, so far as I can judge, did any ill consequences follow. It was the Essays, not the History, that I read, and with the greatest avidity; and the Essays, studied with this devotion, were no bad introduction to a fairly wide range of history, literary and political, and, more particularly, the history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Macaulay, read in this spirit, taught much but suggested more. His enthusiasms were catching. The authors praised by the Master must at least be worth looking at by the disciple. To say that in these years I made a serious study of English literature would be absurd. But I did read with intense enjoyment some of the best things in it. If I was unworthy of *Samson Agonistes*, or of the "Heaven" of *Paradise Lost*, all "Hell" and much of the "Garden of Eden" (to say nothing of *Lycidas* and the early poems) gave me great delight; if the praises lavished on Dryden's *Hind and the Panther* seemed extravagant, *Absalom and Achitophel* in one style, and, in another, the two odes on *St. Cecilia's Day* were greatly to my taste; if I was unable to see that

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the prose of Addison was very much better than the prose of Steele, I could at least glean a gentle pleasure from the most characteristic productions of both—and so on through many generations of crowded literary history. There was here, of course, neither learning nor scholarship ; but there was much easy-going enjoyment — enjoyment which incidentally introduced me to writings in very different styles and to writers of very varying merits.

In like manner I got to have some knowledge of their contemporaries—the politicians and men of action. This was sometimes of the lightest, based perhaps on a single anecdote or passing allusion. But even a bowing acquaintance may be better than nothing, and all these trifles made some contribution to the picture of the age which I was instinctively trying to draw. If it be objected that knowledge so superficial must needs be useless, I will content myself with noting that it is the kind of knowledge which men eagerly seek about their own contemporaries ; and in the matter of gossip I see no reason for drawing invidious distinctions between the present and the past.

A friend to whom I showed these paragraphs about Macaulay reproached me with ignoring his History, and dwelling only on his Essays. But his History, magnificent torso though it be, could never have done for me, or I think any other boy of like mind, what was done by the slighter works. From the nature of the case, essays are limited in their scope. They may throw a brilliant light, but it illuminates a narrow field. Their centres of interest must differ even when they are written by

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the same author and deal with the same period. An article on Clive cannot treat the Seven Years' War from the same point of view as an article on Chatham. Bunyan and Dryden, though contemporaries, cannot with advantage be run in double harness. But although collected essays are for these reasons usually wanting in unity, they are not on that account likely to be less attractive to youthful readers who are both idle and eager. What the boy of historic tastes delights in are vivid glimpses of the long procession of statesmen, authors, and fighting men who constitute the pageant of the past. He knows well enough that they are merely glimpses, totally lacking in historic continuity. But this does not disturb him. A sense of continuity is not fostered by the endeavour to force into a single ordered narrative all the facts known about the past. No such narrative could ever be written, nor, if written, would it ever be read. The boy who cares for history may be trusted to spin his own tissue of connecting threads if he be given time and an adequate provision of material.

Though it may be true that Macaulay was not a great critic, though it be even less disputable that he was not a profound thinker, nevertheless he was, from my point of view, something much more important. He was a showman of supreme genius. The services which this great gift enabled him to render to me, as to countless others of my generation, were inestimable, and I have always remembered them with gratitude. No doubt their range was limited. It could not be otherwise. They

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were a most stimulating introduction to history and literature. But history and literature were not everything, nor were they in my case the only regions of knowledge into which I made frequent if irregular incursions. I cannot remember how or why I first became interested in Natural Science, though the conversation of Mr. Chittenden during the walks he took me at Hoddesdon must have been a leading cause. My mother encouraged every nascent taste, and a taste for science among others. But I do not think she knew much science herself, or ever attempted to teach it to her children. Had my brother Frank been three years my senior instead of being three years my junior, the inspiration might have come from him, for he was born to be a great biologist. My uncle Salisbury (then Lord Robert Cecil) was always interested in chemistry and physics, but as a boy I saw comparatively little of him, and I do not remember his ever talking on these subjects. The question of origins, however, is not important ; but it is otherwise (from an auto-biographical point of view) with the question of development. Neither I nor any one else could foresee, when I was playing about with elementary text-books and Leyden jars, that I was fostering activities predestined to occupy, directly or indirectly, no insignificant part of my working life. To readers well aware that in matters scientific I have never been more than an interested amateur, such a statement may seem surprising, indeed extravagant. Yet I think it is true, though it certainly requires explanation.

Let it then be remembered that in the sixties of the last century—the decade which included

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my time at Eton and Cambridge—the so-called “conflict between religion and science” was in a very acute stage. On the side of Biblical criticism the writings (for example) of David Strauss and Renan had begun to ferment in the minds of many educated people. On the scientific side such works as Lyell’s *Geology* and Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (his *Descent of Man* was not published till 1871) had raised quarrels which apparently are not yet wholly appeased. The times (from the point of view of religious speculation) were stormy, and every dabbler in theology or science was profoundly conscious of the fact. Among these dabblers was I.

Now my mother was a woman of profound religious convictions, and it was in an atmosphere saturated with these convictions that our home life was spent. But how fortunate were we! Controversial questions between the Churches, which she deemed to be of secondary importance, were quietly ignored. We were all of us christened and confirmed in the Church of England; we all of us, when at home, took part, as a matter of course, in the services of our Presbyterian Parish Church. I am to this day a communicant in both Churches.

Nor did this ever lead to any embarrassing situations. Never, so far as our experience went, were the differences between these two branches of the Universal Church ever mentioned in the pulpits of either, nor were they ever discussed at home. But a “conflict between religion and science” was of a very different order of importance. It was not an inheritance from “old, unhappy, far-off” quarrels within the Church. It *was*, and

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in essence *is*, a conflict between a religious view of the Universe and a naturalistic view—the naturalistic view claiming to be the only one in full harmony with the uncorrupted teaching of experimental science.

In this situation my mother showed, so far as I was concerned, the most admirable judgment. She saw that the difficulties to which I have adverted were of a kind which each man must deal with for himself, and in his own way. She was never tempted to discourage scientific study ; she never treated it as dangerous to the higher life ; she never took refuge in bad science when good science appeared to raise awkward problems. On the other hand, she never surrendered her own convictions as to the inestimable value of her central religious beliefs. This point of view, if I rightly represent it, may have lacked theoretic finish ; but it appealed to me in 1866, and after more than sixty years' reflection it appeals to me still.

Considered from my personal point of view, the situation I have endeavoured to describe was of great importance. Had it never arisen I should have gone to Cambridge furnished with “ small Latin and less Greek ” ; with enough mathematics to deprive “ Little Go ” of its terrors ; with a good deal of miscellaneous history, defaced, no doubt, by lamentable gaps but fairly held together by its chronological framework ; with a varied assortment of literary favourites, some French but mostly English ; with a few leading principles of chemistry and physics, and with a general conception of evolution as it was presented in Lyell’s *Geology* and Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. But now

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there was added to them a new subject which profoundly modified the spirit in which I looked forward to the years of University life which lay immediately before me. It was no longer a question of passing the examinations necessary to get a Degree, nor even of diminishing, with the help of accepted authorities, my ignorance of subjects which happened to interest me. Here were problems of the first importance on which there were *no* accepted authorities. They were, of course, engaging the attention of many men of learning and ability. But these inquirers were not agreed about their methods ; they were not agreed about their conclusions ; they were not agreed even about the principles on which their investigations should be conducted. Thus was opened before me a field of speculation which offered the most exciting possibilities, and it was little wonder that I was eager to exchange the routine of even the best of schools for the intellectual variety I looked for at the University.

*Chapters of Autobiography.* 1930.

## VIII

### LORD HALDANE

### Life in a German University

[Lord Haldane touched life at many points. He was distinguished as a scholar, a lawyer, a politician, an administrator, and as a philosopher. As became a man who was always a devoted searcher after truth, his life was marked by great integrity to the causes he deemed important. He was always a friend and admirer of philosophical and intellectual Germany. His work as Secretary of State for War in Liberal administrations from 1905 onwards was of the utmost importance to Britain in the days of the Great War. His sister, Miss Elizabeth Haldane, says of his *Autobiography* that it is "an account of a life-work, a narrative of what was attempted—where there was success, where failure, and what in the writer's view was the meaning of a life which was at least one of constant and strenuous endeavour."]

As we grew up we developed considerable capacities for physical exertion. We became energetic walkers. I have more than once started from Cloan on foot to walk to the top of Ben Lawers, a mountain four thousand feet high in the Grampians, opposite to our home in the Ochils. I recall once starting at two in the morning with my younger brothers, and walking to the top of the Ben and back, seventy-three miles, within

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twenty-three hours. When we got to the foot of the great hill we found a rival party, who had slept the night in an inn, aspiring to do the climb in record time, but our wind was better than theirs, owing to our having been walking over hill and dale all night, and we easily left them behind. These same younger brothers of mine a little later walked from Ballater to Cloan, again over intervening Grampians, doing a walk of one hundred and one miles in thirty hours and fifty minutes, without over-fatigue. In after life, when I was at the Bar, I was able, without being in training, to walk from Brighton to London easily in between thirteen and fourteen hours. Later on in life, when I was War Minister, I remember going down to Lewes, there to inspect the troops commanded by the General of the Division. The motor which was to have taken us to our destination after the inspection did not turn up, and the General asked me rather timidly if I felt equal to walking a little of the way along the Brighton to London road. I smiled and proceeded to set the pace.

In the glens around Cloan we had some experience in stiff climbing. Afterwards, when I went to the University of Göttingen, I accompanied the Professor of Geology and a party of the students on an expedition through the Hartz Mountains to search for fossils. We came opposite to a steep and high cliff, and the Professor said that if we could only do what was impracticable, get at some rock which appeared on the face near the top, we should probably find some striking specimens. I said nothing, but put my hammer in my pocket and suddenly proceeded to scale the cliff. The Germans were not in these days as

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athletic as they afterwards became. There was an agonized adjuration to me to come down. But I got to near the top, and with my hammer extracted from the surface of the rock a likely looking lump. When I got down again, after a not really difficult climb, this was examined, and from it was extracted a rather valuable specimen of fossil. I was reproached for the supposed risk to which I had subjected the party as well as myself. But the fossil was extracted and cleaned, and placed in the University Museum under the title "Petrefactum Nomine Haldane."

My reading in my sixteenth and seventeenth years had begun to disturb my faith in what I then took to be the essential foundations of Christianity. I was at this time much under the influence of religion. It was religion of a somewhat emotional type, stimulated by a wave of feeling which at that time was pervading Scotland. But presently questions forced themselves upon me. Was the basic foundation of such feeling reliable? I began to read copiously. Such books as the *Old Faith and the New* of Strauss, and the criticism and analysis in Renan's *Life of Jesus*, compelled me to put new questions to myself. The divines to whom I turned for personal guidance in those days could not help me much, for they had not themselves gone deeply enough down. I was driven to look to the philosophers, and I then began the study of metaphysics. The idea of my parents was to send me to Balliol College. But they dreaded the supposed influence of the Anglican Church atmosphere of Oxford. However, the Professor of Greek at Edinburgh, Blackie, a man of imagination, who took a great interest in me,

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had an alternative plan. I had talked with him and asked him for guidance, as indeed I had asked guidance of other men whom I knew. Of these some were distinguished in the theological field, but they could do little more than advise me to read Sir William Hamilton and the other survivors of the Scottish School who had written on the Philosophy of the Infinite.

Blackie, with all his erratic methods, was a man of wide views, and he said, "There is one who can do you good and help you, and though he is far from here you must go to him, and I will make it my business to see that you are well received." He persuaded my parents to let me go to Göttingen, at which University Lotze, one of the greatest and most spiritual of modern German thinkers, was then in the height of his fame. I was seventeen and imperfectly acquainted with German, but I set off in a steam-boat from Leith harbour for Hamburg on a Saturday afternoon in April of 1874. My mother and my old nurse came down to see me off. The steamer was heavily laden with iron and was not luxurious, and as I sailed away in these new surroundings my heart sank. However, I found on board a Scottish student of Chemistry called Rogers, who had been at Göttingen before, and who was going back after his holidays. He befriended me, and when we got to Hamburg we spent the day in that city and started at night in a train which was due to reach Göttingen about four in the morning. We got there, and he very kindly took me to his rooms, in the Groner Strasse, where I slept for two hours on the sofa. But I did not go to sleep without first looking out of the window,

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and there, in that strange University town, everything that I saw seemed to be so unfamiliar that I longed for my home. In the grey of the dawn what particularly distressed me was to see a woman and a dog drawing along the street a cart containing a man and a calf. I felt that these were odd and unfamiliar people among whom I had come to live. In the morning I found rooms, settled in, and began slowly to make acquaintances. I took lessons in German from a lady with whom I became great friends and whom I visited most years at Göttingen in the period before I became Lord Chancellor, after which I could not go abroad while holding office. Fräulein Schlote, to whom I shall refer again later, has now passed away. The grief of the War—for to her it was a great grief—combined with old age to end her life. But she was a good friend to me and gave me much help in my studies. After I was out of office I used to visit her, and we kept up a constant correspondence till her death.

Lotze, to whom I bore a letter of introduction from Blackie, was very kind. A quiet, reserved old man, he saw the nature of the crisis my mind was passing through, and he set me to read Fichte's popular works, and particularly the *Vocation of Man*. With the aid of these and of Berkeley I began to work myself out of my mood and, under the stimulus of Lotze's teaching, to acquire a wider point of view.

The students were a very miscellaneous set, and although I came across some good ones among them, I am not sure that I saw the best of them. They took an interest in the English stranger, and

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made me a member of a “Verbindung”—the Hildesia Verbindung, a sort of second-rate students’ corps, the members of which used to meet weekly at “Kneipen,” and some of whom, including myself, used to dine together. I began to learn German rapidly, and to fall into the ways of the University. Göttingen was then a primitive place, with about half the population it has now, and it had not become the admirable University centre, so far as the permeation of the social life of the town by the University was concerned, that it became in the years before the Great War of 1914. But I saw something of its distinguished men, and the University life was a very interesting one. I took up, as a bystudy, Geology, under Professor von Seebach, who lectured on that subject.

I made tours round Göttingen, and walked a great deal, and was present at duels fought by members of my “Verbindung.” These seemed to me no light matters ; the wounds were sometimes formidable, and I have seen blood spurting an inch high from a vein. At the “Verbindung” the students had rather riotous meetings. I recall, too, that we owned as a society a large poodle dog, whom I remember well, the only confirmed drunkard I have seen among the canine species. He used eagerly to lap up the beer that had been spilled into a bowl placed to catch the overflow from the spigot of our beer cask, and to become so tipsy that despite all efforts he could not get on his legs to come to us when summoned. At our meetings, which took place weekly, there was naturally much talk, and I picked up colloquial German quickly.

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The life of the students at Göttingen in 1874 was somewhat rough. It seemed to me to be odd, when I was matriculated at the University, that I should have to bind myself not to walk out in the streets in a dressing-gown and slippers, but I soon found that this University law, which was enforced by the University police, was not an unnecessary one. The ways of the students were eccentric. I lived in rooms opening off a staircase ending in the street, the ground floor of the house being occupied by a furrier called Nöhden, in the Zindel Strasse, close to the Rathskeller. To enter the house, and indeed all the students' lodgings consisted of rooms opening similarly off staircases entered from the street, we were each provided with an enormous key, called a "Hausbar," which we carried slung to the bands of our waist-coats and detached when we wanted it. These keys often opened many street doors, so that there was not much privacy in one's rooms, into which brother students were in the habit of penetrating very freely. I remember one night when I awoke in my room, which, although it belonged to me alone, had two beds, I became conscious that something else was stirring close to me. I leant over the edge of the bed and saw two red eyes glaring at me from underneath it, and was much concerned. I then heard something which was unmistakably a snore from the other bed, which ought to have been unoccupied, and striking a light, I found that a drunken student who had missed his way had let himself in with his great key and had come up the stairs and got into my room and gone to sleep in the other bed, leaving his poodle to sleep under mine. I extended

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hospitality by resuming my couch and falling<sup>1</sup> peacefully asleep.

The rooms were very dirty and the washing facilities but scanty ; therefore we used to go in the morning to bathe in the Leine, the stream which Bismarck is said to have made famous as one into which he jumped to avoid his creditors in his student days. To bathe was really the only effective mode of getting a bath which we possessed, and the Leine was not a particularly clean river. The town in those days reeked of tanning, as it was a great place for the manufacture of a rough kind of leather, but the main feature was then, as always, the University, the professors of which were a very brilliant set. Although I remained a matriculated student at Göttingen for some time, I did not return as a student there ; my next period, in the following year, being spent at Dresden, where I went because I wanted to read Philosophy in peace, and where I had no friend except the Professor of Philosophy in the Dresden Polytechnic. Later on I began to visit Göttingen pretty frequently, and established an intimate relation with a good many of the professors. The theologians wanted, years later, when I had become well known in Germany and had written books, to confer on me the Honorary Doctorate in Theology, but the Arts Faculty insisted that it should be a Doctorate in Philosophy, coupled with the honorary degree of Master of Arts. This they did confer on me, bestowing it at the same time upon another person whom they held in esteem—Admiral Tirpitz. The elaborate address which they presented to me, commemorative of my honorary degree, I have kept, and even during the

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War my name was never expunged from the list of their graduates. In this respect they set one example which some over here would have done well to follow.

Notwithstanding the distractions of student life at the University I was not really deflected from the purpose with which I had gone there. My main occupation was the study of Philosophy, with a certain amount of Theology. Through the effort this required my mind became further awakened. I had broken away from the creeds of the churches at home, and I now seemed to be coming back to a larger outlook, which made that breaking away taken by itself seem less important than I had formerly thought it to be. When I returned to Scotland it was in much better spirits, and with the first steps taken towards the attainment of something like a settled outlook, which was as time went on to mean much to me.

Despite the exuberances of German student life, many of my fellow-students worked hard and systematically. Some of them were good company, companions who were trying to seek after truth. There was certainly no tendency in the University circles to any form of ecclesiasticism. Indeed, religion of any definite kind was little talked of. Great teaching was given to us, however, by some of the professors about the ultimate nature of things. I was instructed to read not only Fichte and Bishop Berkeley when I was there but also Kant, and was taught to reflect. When my time at Göttingen was over, I brought back with me a stock of new ideas, Berkeley's teaching in particular having laid hold of me. I had now become

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emancipated from religious depression, and my attention had become concentrated on a search for light about the meaning of God, Freedom, and Immortality. Lotze's influence had set me to pursue the search in a new spirit, and with a fuller consciousness of the vast theoretical obscurity in which these subjects were buried.

There was real reverence for the personalities of the great teachers who abounded, and who drew disciples from distant parts of Germany. It was felt that in the University, if anywhere, progress might be looked for in solving the problems of existence. Despite appearances, the community was a seriously minded one, and it was not easy to live there without being moved by the sense of this. Even so, one felt that the war with France, concluded in favour of Germany three years earlier, had not failed somewhat to let down the old spiritual level. Money had come to count for more than was the case in the days of Herbart and Gauss and Ewald.

I used to learn about the past of the University from my old teacher in German literature, Fräulein Schlotे, to whom I have already referred. She had for many years presided over a school for girls, of high standing. She was also one of the most accomplished women I ever came across. She knew her Goethe as only a scholar could, and she had a wide acquaintance with English literature. In after years, when I went to revisit Göttingen, as I often did, I saw her regularly. During the War she had lost her savings and had much hardship to endure, and I was able to be of some little use in helping her to face these difficulties until she died in 1925. In her letters she

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kept me informed of new movements in German opinion and literature and theology. She was as devout as she was instructed, and the consciousness of what she taught me fills me with affectionate gratitude.

*An Autobiography.* 1929.

## IX

### STORM JAMESON

#### Education

[Margaret Storm Jameson is one of the leading women writers of the present generation. Her sequence of novels, now collected under the title, *The Triumph of Time*, firmly established her reputation as a novelist of importance. *No Time like the Present* is a sensitive and revealing record of the formative years of her life ; and also a record of the influence of the catastrophe of the War upon it. The story of her education, related in this selection, may profitably be contrasted by readers with that of the education of Lord Balfour.]

As soon as we were old enough my mother sent us to a larger school in the town, kept by three gentle-women of the name of Ingham. The actual teaching was in the hands of the youngest, Miss Lily Ingham. This was a most fortunate thing for me. Miss Lily was a teacher in the direct line of the schoolmen. She had the wisdom of a simpler age and a singular and exquisite capacity for surprise and interest. You had only to look at her to notice her transparent goodness. In my part of England we are very fond of the word "genuine." We say that So-and-so is genuine—but usually it means only that he has no grace. Miss Lily was genuine in that she was utterly without dross of

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self. She knew a great many things outside the curriculum : she lent me botanical books and I worked patiently to make a collection of wild flowers, which I pressed and mounted. (My father took it to South America and gave it to a school for English girls in Buenos Ayres. What a pity the colours were faded.)

Their school was in a large old house and its windows looked across the upper harbour. There was a large crab-apple tree in the garden, and a flagged yard where a coast-guard drilled us once a week. The teaching was admirable and I thank my stars completely untroubled by new methods. We sat unscientifically on benches and pored over our school books. I got by heart enormous quantities of verse, the whole of *Marmion*, and *The Lady of the Lake*, *Henry V.*, *Childe Harold*, and the first book of *Paradise Lost*. Some examination board is responsible for the selection. I walked home from school with a book in my hand, murmuring :

“ My lord I’ll tell you, that self bill is urged  
Which in the last year of the late king’s reign . . . ”

I read in the bath and as I cleaned my boots. I hid books under the mattress of my bed and bore innumerable thrashings for reading before breakfast, a practice my mother considered unhealthy. I should have read on the way to school if we had not always been late and had to run violently for a mile and a half. When my brother was little he went to this school and we ran him along mercilessly between us, his fat short legs going like pistons and his breath coming in gasps.

Miss Lily believed the end of education to be the

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beginning of knowledge. She pressed on us a miscellaneous diet of facts and we ate it bones and all. We learned and repeated "Dewsbury for blankets, Batley for shoddy mills," and knew in their order the names of the bays and capes round the coasts of every continent and a great deal more that I forgot as easily as I learned. I should not get off so lightly now—a highly-trained modern teacher would take pains to unfold my mind. This is surely a very doubtful undertaking. Miss Lily contented herself with the attempt to satisfy a bottomless curiosity. She told us as many things as she knew herself and we remembered all we could. She made us get *Lycidas* by heart and told us enchanting fables about Mary Queen of Scots. Modern psychology accuses her of crushing the infant imagination. Actually, she respected it too much to meddle with it and it went its serene way behind massed peaceful ranks of facts. Our knowledge of mental processes is still inconceivably crude, but the experimentalist jabs hopefully with it at the delicate chrysalis of the young mind. If we could even guess the effect of this crude meddling on the child's nervous system! And after all they don't tell him about Dewsbury and the blankets. I am prejudiced—I admit it—against modern education. I don't really think that the old was good, but that the new is too pleased with itself. The results, measured in the kind of civilization we are creating, don't seem very good. Miss Lily was humble where her successors are knowledgeable and confident. But what do they know and of what are they confident?

In those days Whitby parents who wished their

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children to have a secondary education had to send them twenty miles to Scarborough. By the time I was fifteen I knew what I wanted—that was to learn, to be a scholar. My mother determined to help me. She made inquiries and found that there were three open scholarships offered in the North Riding. Clearly I must get one of these. It seemed quite simple. You took the matriculation examination and did so well in it that they gave you one of the scholarships. My mother and I travelled to Scarborough and called on the headmaster of the Municipal School, and my mother told him that she had decided to send me there for a year to take a scholarship to the university. I wore a new coat that was too large for me, to allow for growing, and I looked like a young owl. Our simple confidence must have been very funny but I don't remember that he smiled.

The train journey to Scarborough takes seventy minutes. It stopped at every station and more children got into the carriages reserved for us. We were a rowdy, destructive crew, detested by passengers and station-masters. At places in the journey we came close to the sea, in summer dazzling us with a radiance that the very air caught up and reflected. In winter, I waited in tense expectation for the point where, if the newly-risen sun had passed behind clouds, it sent its rays down on to the edge of the sea in a great ring of glittering light. That was worth seeing. At night coming home Whitby was a scatter of lights in the darkness. It gave me the most extraordinary feeling, an almost unbearable pleasure and excitement. I felt light, as if I were going to cry with happiness.

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The school was for boys and girls, their class-rooms divided by the big hall. In the morning and at leaving we sang a hymn, standing together in the hall. That is fine, you know. There is something finely exhilarating about hymn-singing when the voices are young and untrained. We really enjoyed it. We liked to let ourselves go on "Now praise we all our God," and "The da-ay Thou ga-avest, Lo-ord, is ended." The school stands over a valley, full of large old trees. In spring we noticed the buds of the sycamores, quivering and fawn-coloured, against the delicate blue of the sky.

There were two classes in which boys and girls sat together. They were quite different from the other, segregated classes. There was a different feeling, livelier and more unruly. Although there was a certain clear, unacknowledged rivalry, boys against girls, I am certain that it was a good feeling, infinitely better for both than segregation. So far as it went, the education I got here was admirable. It fell short where every school falls short, in the training of the body—to which end organized games are nearly useless. The more intelligent children are bored by them, yet it is these children whose bodies most need support against the assault of their minds.

Here I made my first real friends, two boys of the name of Harland. They were clever, ambitious, and turbulent—bad friends for me, authority said, but I thought otherwise. I can't imagine now what they saw in me, to make them take trouble—I was unformed and wordless, no match for either of them. I don't think they were actually more intelligent, but their minds were already controlled. At this time I was much too

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afraid of ridicule to form any opinions. It is true I had a great many, but they were none of them mine. All I asked of a belief before accepting it was that it should be a revolt against something old and respectable. The two Harlands were great talkers—and that suited me very well since I had nothing to say, or no words for it. In summer we formed the habit of going for walks together after school. We were so used to it that we never looked at the superb bay, flickering in sunlight or the colour of verdigris'd bronze before a storm. They easily converted me to Socialism and what was then called Rationalism. (Perhaps it still is.) As for Socialism I was ashamed not to be on the side of the poor and defrauded, and time has strengthened the feeling in me. But I have come to believe that men need gods—yet can have no feeling for that God who is so accommodating as to have been on both sides in the War.

I can imagine that to my teachers I seemed very raw and unfledged. In my own eyes I was growing up quickly. My ambitions became boundless but I was afraid to speak about them. I had enough sense to know that they were ridiculous in an awkward girl. I was very awkward. I forgot that I had a body and it reminded me by falling over a desk or turning scarlet in summer. All this time I was reading and dreaming. But I could never finish a dull book. The boys gave me Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* : it bored me and I only pretended I had read it. It was easier to shut the book and dream. I dreamed that I was famous, that I was a beautiful woman, and again that I was famous. Actually, I had no instinct

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to make very much of what looks I had. At learning I was not even quick and I could not learn anything unless it interested me. Then I could almost feel my brain moving, like a strong clumsy machine. The mathematics lessons were an agony to me. My brain seemed paralysed—I stared at formulæ without a glimmer of understanding in it. It was the same in the art class, when we were told to make a design. What is a design? I had no idea, and I sat feeling ashamed and stupid. The boy in front of me was drawing quick bold curves. I looked over his arm and made a copy of them, but it was thin and wooden, a complete failure. How I hated the teachers whose lessons I could not learn. I was detestable then—rude, arrogant, stubborn. I managed to keep near the top of the class, because I could use words and because I remembered so much. And at the end of my year I did get one of the coveted scholarships and went to Leeds University. My two friends had gone to King's College in London and I went up to Leeds alone.

I have never wanted to write about that time. The crude, unformed thoughts of those years, which seem so important, the awkward passions—they are only ridiculous in retrospect. I did not realize at the time that I was deciding my whole life. I worked hard but erratically. Sometimes for days I did not open a book and then I would sit up all night, bath, and eat my breakfast, and go to college feeling light and alert. There was then no hostel for the women students, but I think the men had a single Hall. Students who were not living at home with their parents had rooms near the university and this spread a queer

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“ free ” atmosphere among us. There were no rules to be kept. There was no reason, provided you could get in without disturbing your landlady, why you should come in before three or four o’clock. In my first year I moved four times—I had very little money and I was fastidious—but after that I settled down. I had a bedroom and sitting-room for eighteen shillings a week—the money included breakfast and a kind of supper. My other meals I ate in the college refectory, where—I think because in her heart she liked the scapegrace ones best—Mrs. Beck was my good, kind, dear friend. A Yorkshirewoman of rare spirit, she ruled her department as an autocrat. The authorities respected her, and she them, provided they did not meddle with her. She was a most loyal servant of the university and the friend of the generations of students whom she has helped, scolded, advised, and loved.

My landlady, who was kind, turned out to be deaf as well, and sometimes on fine light nights I came home from a long walk in the early morning and let myself in with the key I had coaxed from her. The senior women students would have disapproved of these escapades but we kept still tongues about them—they were part of my illusion of freedom. I was stiff and unabateable—and very young for my age. In spite of it I was accepted as a responsible person and began to be chosen on committees. In my third year I was elected secretary of the Women’s Representative Council of the Union. My best deed in that capacity was that I bought a new carpet for our common room. There were no funds for it but I argued that we must buy it and show an unbalanced

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budget at the end of the year. The professor who was treasurer of the Union said that in a long experience no woman secretary had ever failed to keep to her budget. But I still think I was right. After all, we really needed the carpet and the money was there, though they would not have spent it on us.

How convey the spirit of these north-country universities? Oxford is in another world. Among the students one met a rough good-will, shrewdness, and an urgency of ambition. All but a few of them had already a definite purpose—they needed degrees in order to teach, to do commercial research, to become engineers, dyers, managers in steel works and woollen mills. There was in most of them a fixed awareness that these three years were only a doorway, and while they played, debated, got up concerts, played the fool, they had always a rope pulling them back to their responsibility. There was not much money spent. But you would not have called us poor scholars. Scholarship for its own sake was not usual among us. Insensibly my vague notions of a life spent among books dropped off, and I began to be anxious for my future. This was not a new anxiety—I had long since determined to be independent and indeed it was necessary. But now I began to think that scholarship would not bring me in any money. As I walked about Leeds I felt around me and under my feet the pulse of a vast machine. I might be in a university library bent over an Anglo-Saxon grammar but five minutes' walk brought me to the place where, through a gap between houses, I stared at the ring of factories closing in the town on three sides.

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By day hideous, at night flames writhed from the chimneys—that was indescribably beautiful and exciting.

You cannot set a university in the centre of an industrial region and think that it will become cloistral. Life at its least gentle, the forms of a purely mechanical civilization, were clamped round us. But what is the use of cloistering up young men and women? For us, of course, nothing was really important. With one exception, all the young men who were my friends in the university were killed within the next three years, Duncan Fairley, smiling, intelligent, slow-moving, Henry Knowles, who was the most direct, the honestest person I ever knew, Bobbie Watherston, who laughed, and believed in God and the Church. I remember best small things about them—that one was angry with me because I could not recognize God Save the King when he whistled it for me during a competition at some professor's garden party; that another stammered as soon as he became excited—and these, with a few smiles, and with the image of a young frowning face, eyes narrowed in sunlight, and a word or two remembered but only by some accident, seem more important than they are. It seems important to remember these especially. The war memorial, with its long list of names, is not, as some think, a permission to forget how this boy laughed and how another liked strawberries and dancing and to read German aloud. Because it was laughter, dancing, strawberries, and the reading of books, that they laid down, and not something vague and immaterial.

My mind during these years was cruelly con-

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fused and uncertain. I wanted to take a First Class in the Honours English school but beyond that I had no idea what I could do. I had never thought of writing, and for some reason I did not expect the university authorities to do anything for me. Why should they? In spite of an air of confidence and arrogance that I could put on when necessary, I had no real belief in myself. I suffered tortures from shyness and from my social ignorance. Yet all the time I was restless with ambition—but it was all undirected and formless. I wanted to work, to earn money—but I wanted something else, too, that I never told any one about. My restlessness grew as I became used to the routine of work and lectures. There were days when I *could* not sit quietly reading. I leaned in the window of my room, watching, waiting for something to happen, or fled from the house and walked for hours until I was too tired to think. I did not know what was wrong. My mind was a chaos of ideas gathered from books, from the *New Age*, from the economics I read struggling to understand. I knew now that I had been wrong to take the English schools. If of myself I had had discrimination and a precise habit of mind the three years of reading might have exercised me. I had not these. And an English course is not so much a training as an endurance test—it involves the poets from the Anglo-Saxon remnant to Keats, pre-Shakespearean drama, Shakespeare, and the rest to Sheridan, near a score each of divines, essayists, pamphleteers, and novelists, beside the History and Theory of Criticism—which set off in the *Poetics* and ended, after marching through Sidney, Jonson, Dante,

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Dryden, Boileau, Pope, Wordsworth, Shelley, and I have forgotten what more, without my having got even the beginnings of a critical sensibility. Indeed, if I had had the wit I had not the time ; in my first year I “ did ” as well French and philosophy, and to the last my stubborn head strove to lose Anglo-Saxon and its hard roots as fast as I to get them : one whole summer vacation was spent writing the thesis required of Honours students—I had chosen to write mine on Blake, whom I supposed I understood. This was an illusion. I should have done better to study economics or biology—but I had had no adviser and it was too late to change. My scholarship had been given for three years, only for three years. I see now that I behaved like a child. I ought to have worked to persuade the authorities that I was fitted for an academic life. Instead, I lounged in the day-time and made up in feverish reading at night. On the only occasion when I was asked what I thought of doing I answered helplessly that I didn’t know. I could not answer : “ I want to earn money and to be famous ! ” I don’t remember that any one offered me advice about my future and it did not occur to me to ask for it. I was afraid of a rebuff. Suppose people were to laugh at me !

In my second year I fell in love—you would say, deliberately—with an undergraduate two years my senior. An emotional distraction added itself to the other elements of confusion. No one was pleased, neither my friends, nor his, nor my parents. But I was as stubborn as always. Though there was nothing safe or tranquil in the experience—I was not happy, except at the first,

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and I was often puzzled and disappointed—I felt firmly that we should marry and be happy. In spite of this disturbance—in spite, too, of a certain instability in my nature, which older people noticed but I did not—I got my First, and a research scholarship for another year.

The night before I went down I sat up talking to my closest friend, a dark, handsome girl, whose nature had already the firmness and balance mine lacked. For the first time I told another person of my ambitions. She listened quietly: I think she knew I should be disappointed, and she did not like the young man I was going to marry. I walked home with her and came back alone past Woodhouse Moor. The night was very dark, without stars. I went round out of my way in order to stand and look at the chimneys of the furnaces. My heart moved in deep heavy strokes. A wild hurting excitement filled me. How happy I was.

*No Time like the Present.* 1933.

# X

BEATRICE WEBB

## The London Season of the 'Eighties

[Mrs. Sidney Webb is widely known as the author, in collaboration with her husband, Lord Passfield, of a series of researches which are of the utmost value to students of economics, history, and sociology. Herself a member of London Society as the daughter of Mr. Richard Potter, a railway magnate of the Victorian era, and the friend of Herbert Spencer, she began what has proved to be her life work, as a sharer in Charles Booth's memorable investigations into the life and labour of the people in London. From that time on, as she herself says, social investigation became her craft in life, and in this work she has proved herself a master craftsman. *My Apprenticeship* is not only of outstanding value as autobiography, it is a book which should be studied by every student engaged in sociological research.]

THE masculine world of big enterprise, with its passion for adventure and assumption of power, had its complement for its womenkind in the annual "London season" and all that it implied. I do not know whether this peculiar and I imagine ephemeral type of social intercourse still survives; or whether, in so far as the daughters of business and professional men are concerned, it gradually faded away with the opening of university education and professional careers to women in the

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twentieth century. But in the 'seventies and 'eighties the London season, together with its derivative country-house visiting, was regarded by wealthy parents as the equivalent, for their daughters, of the university education and professional training afforded for their sons, the adequate reason being that marriage to a man of their own or a higher social grade was the only recognized vocation for women not compelled to earn their own livelihood. It was this society life which absorbed nearly half the time and more than half the vital energy of the daughters of the upper and upper middle class ; it fixed their standards of personal expenditure ; it formed their manners and, either by attraction or repulsion, it determined their social ideals. When I turned to social investigation as my craft in life, it was just my experience of London Society that started me with a personal bias effectually discounting, even if it did not wholly supersede, my father's faith in the social value of a leisured class.

Can I define, as a good sociologist should, the social entity I am about to criticize ? For this purpose I do not know whether it is an advantage or disadvantage that I observed it, not from a position of privilege, but as one of the common herd of well-to-do folk who belonged or thought they belonged to London Society. From my particular point of observation London Society appeared as a shifting mass of miscellaneous and uncertain membership ; it was essentially a body that could be defined, not by its circumference, which could not be traced, but by its centre or centres ; centres of social circles representing or

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epitomizing certain dominant forces within the British governing class. There was the Court, representing national tradition and custom ; there was the Cabinet and ex-Cabinet, representing political power ; there was a mysterious group of millionaire financiers representing money ; there was the racing set—or was it the Jockey Club ? I am not versed in these matters—representing sport. All persons who habitually entertained and who were entertained by the members of any one of these key groups could claim to belong to London Society. These four inner circles crossed and recrossed each other owing to an element of common membership ; this, in the 'seventies and 'eighties, happening to consist of striking personalities : such, for instance, as Edward, Prince of Wales, and the magnetically attractive Grand Seigneur who, as the tiresome tag tells, won the Derby, married a Rothschild, and was destined to become Prime Minister of the British Empire at a time when there was still a British Empire. Surrounding and solidifying these four intersecting social circles was a curiously tough substance—the British aristocracy—an aristocracy, as a foreign diplomatist once remarked to me, “ the most talented, the most energetic, and the most vulgar in the world ” ; characteristics which he attributed to a perpetual process of casting out and renewal, younger sons and daughters falling out of social rank to sink or swim among their fellow-commoners, whilst the new rich of the British Empire and the United States were assimilated by marriage, or by the sale of honours to persons of great riches, but with mean minds and mediocre manners, in order to replenish the electoral funds

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of the "ins" and "outs." But however diluted or enlarged the old landed aristocracy might be by marriage or the manufactured-for-money article, it did not surround or isolate the Court ; it was already a minor element in the Cabinet ; and though it might still claim precedence on the race-course and the hunting field, it was barely represented in the ever-changing group of international financiers who ruled the money-market. The bulk of the shifting mass of wealthy persons who were conscious of belonging to London Society, who practised its rites and followed its fashions, were, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, professional profit-makers ; the old-established families of bankers and brewers, often of Quaker descent, coming easily first in social precedence ; then one or two great publishers and, at a distance, shipowners, the chairmen of railway and some other great corporations, the largest of the merchant bankers—but as yet no retailers. Scattered in this pudding-stone of men of rank and men of property were jewels of intellect and character ; cultivated diplomatists from all the countries of the world, great lawyers, editors of powerful newspapers, scholarly ecclesiastics of the Anglican and Roman Catholic communions ; the more "stylish" of the permanent heads of Government departments, and here and there a star personage from the world of science, literature or art, who happened to combine delight in luxurious living and the company of great personages with social gifts and a fairly respectable character. To this strangely heterogeneous crowd were added from time to time topical "lions," belonging to all races and all vocations, with strictly temporary tickets

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of admission for the season of their ephemeral notoriety.

Now the first and foremost characteristic of the London season and country-house life, a characteristic which distinguished it from the recreation and social intercourse of the rest of the community, was the fact that some of the men and practically all the women made the pursuit of pleasure their main occupation in life. I say advisedly *some* of the men, because the proportion of functionless males, I mean in the economic sense, varied according to whether the particular social circle frequented was dominated by the Cabinet and ex-Cabinet or by the racing and sporting set. Among my own acquaintances (I except mere partners at London and country-house dances, for dancing men in my time were mostly fools) there were very few men who were not active brain-workers in politics, administration, law, science or literature. In the racing set, which I knew only by repute, I gathered that the professional brain-workers, whether speculators or artists, book-makers, trainers or jockeys and the like, rarely belonged to "society"; in their social and economic subordination these professional workers of the world of sport did not differ materially from other providers of entertainment—game-keepers, gardeners, cooks, and tradesmen. But about the women there was no such distinction. In the brilliant memoirs of Mrs. Asquith—a document, owing to its frankness, of great value to the sociologist—this fact is brought out with startling and attractive vividness. Riding, dancing, flirting, and dressing up—in short, entertaining and being entertained—all occupa-

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tions which imply the consumption and not the production of commodities and services, were the very substance of her life before marriage and a large and important part of it after marriage. And my own experience as an unmarried woman was similar. How well I recollect those first days of my early London seasons : the pleasurable but somewhat feverish anticipation of endless distraction, a dissipation of mental and physical energy which filled up all the hours of the day and lasted far into the night ; the ritual to be observed ; the presentation at Court, the riding in the Row, the calls, the lunches and dinners, the dances and crushes, Hurlingham and Ascot, not to mention amateur theatricals and other sham philanthropic excrescences. There was of course a purpose in all this apparently futile activity, the business of getting married ; a business carried on by parents and other promoters, sometimes with genteel surreptitiousness, sometimes with cynical effrontery. Meanwhile, as one form of entertainment was piled on another, the pace became fast and furious ; a mania for reckless talking, for the experimental display of one's own personality, ousted all else from consciousness. Incidentally I discovered that personal vanity was an "occupational disease" of London Society ; and that any one who suffered as I did from constitutional excitability in this direction, the symptoms being not only painful ups and downs of inflation and depression but also little lies and careless cruelties, should avoid it as the very devil. By the end of the season, indigestion and insomnia had undermined physical health ; a distressing mental nausea, taking the form of cynicism about one's

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own and other people's character, had destroyed all faith in and capacity for steady work. And when these years of irresponsible girlhood were over, and I found myself my father's housekeeper and hostess, I realized that the pursuit of pleasure was not only an undertaking, but also an elaborate, and to me a tiresome undertaking, entailing extensive plant, a large number of employees and innumerable decisions on insignificant matters. There was the London house to be selected and occupied ; there was the stable of horses and carriages to be transported ; there was the elaborate stock of prescribed garments to be bought ; there was all the commissariat and paraphernalia for dinners, dances, picnics, and week-end parties to be provided. Among the wealthier of one's relatives and acquaintances there were the deer forests and the shooting-boxes, all entailing more machinery, the organization of which frequently devolved on the women of the household.

For good or evil, according to the social ideals of the student, this remarkable amalgam, London Society and country-house life, differed significantly from other social aristocracies. There were no fixed caste barriers ; there seemed to be, in fact, no recognized types of exclusiveness based on birth or breeding, on personal riches or on personal charm ; there was no fastidiousness about manners or morals or intellectual gifts. Like the British Empire, London Society had made itself what it was in a fit of absent-mindedness. To foreign observers it appeared all-embracing in its easy-going tolerance and superficial good nature. "One never knows who one is going to sit next

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at a London dinner party," ruefully remarked the afore-mentioned diplomatist. But deep down in the unconscious herd instinct of the British governing class there *was* a test of fitness for membership of this most gigantic of all social clubs, but a test which was seldom recognized by those who applied it, still less by those to whom it was applied, *the possession of some form of power over other people*. The most obvious form of power, and the most easily measurable, was the power of wealth. Hence any family of outstanding riches, if its members were not actually mentally deficient or legally disreputable, could hope to rise to the top, marry its daughters to Cabinet Ministers and noblemen, and even become in time itself ennobled. I once asked a multi-millionaire of foreign extraction, with a domestic circle not distinguished in intellect or character, why he had settled in England rather than in Paris, Berlin, or Vienna. "Because in England there is complete social equality," was his rapid retort: an answer that was explained, perhaps verified, by a subsequent announcement that King Edward and his *entourage* had honoured by his presence the millionaire's palatial country residence. Personal wealth was, however, only one of the many different types of power accepted as a passport to good society; a great industrial administrator, not himself endowed with much capital, so long as he could provide remunerative posts for younger sons or free passes on trans-continental railways, could, if he chose, associate on terms of flattering personal intimacy with those members of the British aristocracy, and there were many of them, who desired these favours. And it must be admitted

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that there was no narrow view as to the type of power to be honoured with the personal intercourse of great personages. Thirty years before the Labour Party became His Majesty's Government there was a distinct desire, on the part of a select politico-social set, to welcome the leaders of the newly enfranchized Trade Union democracy. And if the tiny group of Labour leaders had not been singularly refined and retiring, and, be it added, puritanical men, they also would have been caught up in the meshes of society, to be immediately dropped when they ceased to represent their thousands of members. The same worship of power was shown in the supersession of one type of person by another. For instance, in the 'seventies the editors of great newspapers and other periodicals, men of broad culture and great experience of public affairs, were honoured guests ; but even in my time the editors were beginning to be overshadowed by the millionaire newspaper proprietors, men who were not distinguished by wit, wisdom, technical skill or professional good manners. The more recent and more notorious instance of this driving out of the finer by the baser type was the social subserviency of quite well-bred and cultivated men and women to the South African millionaires, some of whom had neither manners nor morals ; and all of whom were immeasurably inferior in charm and refinement, if not to the Rothschilds, most assuredly to the Barings and Glyns, the Lubbocks, Hoares, and Buxtons, who had represented money power in the London Society of the 'seventies and 'eighties. What was even more demoralizing than this degraded and coarsening scale of values, be-

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cause it bred a poisonous cynicism about human relations, was the making and breaking of personal friendships according to temporary and accidental circumstances in no way connected with personal merit : gracious appreciation and insistent intimacy being succeeded, when failure according to worldly standards occurred, by harsh criticism and cold avoidance. More especially was this the case in the relations between women. The rumour of an approaching marriage to a great political personage would be followed by a stream of invitations ; if the rumour proved unfounded the shower stopped with almost ridiculous promptitude. A similar drying up of the effusive and appreciative friendship of leaders of Society was experienced by wives and daughters stripped by death of celebrated husbands and fathers. This sub-conscious pursuit of power was manifested in a more equivocal form. The conventional requirements with regard to personal morality, sexual or financial, were graded with almost meticulous exactitude to the degree of social, political or industrial power exercised by the person concerned. A duchess, especially if she came from a princely family, might exchange her insignificant duke for a powerful marquis as a habitual companion without causing the slightest dent in her social acceptability. But if Mrs. Smith indulged in similar domestic waywardness the penalty was complete social ostracism. The same graded requirements were applied to financial misdemeanour. Past iniquities of a multi-millionaire, whose millions were secure, were discreetly forgotten ; an honourable bankruptcy brought about by lack of knowledge or sheer ill luck led to ignor-

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ing not the sin but the sinner. There seemed in fact to be a sort of invisible stock exchange in constant communication with the leading hostesses in London and in the country ; the stock being social reputations and the reason for appreciation or depreciation being worldly success or failure however obtained. Some stocks were gilt-edged, royal personages or persons who were at once outstandingly wealthy and genuinely aristocratic, their value could neither be "bulled" nor "beared" by current rumours ; but the social value of the ruck of individuals who trooped to the political receptions or foregathered in the houses of the less well-known hostesses, went up and down as rapidly and unexpectedly as do the shares of the less well-known and more hazardous "industrials" in the money market.<sup>1</sup> It was this continuous uncertainty as to social status that led to all the ugly methods of entertaining practised by the crowd who wanted "to get into society" ; the variety or "menagerie" element in many entertainments so often caricatured by

<sup>1</sup> It appears from *Lord Randolph Churchill*, by Winston Churchill, 1906, Vol. I., p. 74, that even the son of a duke might suffer this swift change from caressing friendliness to cold neglect, if he had incurred the enmity of a sufficiently powerful person, say, for instance, Edward, Prince of Wales. "But in the year 1876," recounts the son and biographer of Lord Randolph, "an event happened which altered, darkened, and strengthened his whole life and character. Engaging in his brother's quarrels with force and reckless partisanship, Lord Randolph incurred the deep displeasure of a great personage. The fashionable world no longer smiled. Powerful enemies were anxious to humiliate him. His own sensitiveness and pride magnified every coldness into an affront. London became odious to him. The breach was not repaired for more than eight years, and in the interval a nature originally genial and gay contracted a stern and bitter quality, a harsh contempt for what is called 'Society,' and an abiding antagonism to rank and authority." How oddly old-fashioned this scale of values reads in these democratic days !

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*Punch* ; the competition in conspicuous expenditure on clothes, food, wine, and flowers ; above all, the practice of inviting persons with whom you had nothing in common because they would attract desired guests to your house. Nor did the manners of the most gifted and fastidious members of the governing groups remain unaffected by this competitive element in London Society, the push inwards by the crowd being inevitably followed, in order to rid themselves of unwelcome attentions, by a push outwards by the members of the inner circles. Now, it is the push that is vulgar, not its direction ; and the fact that the push outwards was, by well-bred persons, usually manifested, not in words or acts, but by subtle forms of insolent expression, " that distant look characteristic of people who do not wish to be agreeable, and who from suddenly receding depths of their eyes seem to have caught sight of you at the far end of an interminably straight road," to quote the inimitable Marcel Proust, did not make it less a breach of good-fellowship, and therefore of good manners, than the swear-words of Billingsgate. And yet who could blame socially distinguished men and women for developing in the course of a long life, spent in the midst of a mob of competing hostesses, this self-protective colouring of a detached but withering insolence of gesture and expression assumed at will towards this or that person whom they were compelled to recognize as social acquaintances, but whose company had always been or had become distasteful to them ? There may be saints who can live untainted in such an environment, exactly as we know that there are men and women who

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retain their moral refinement in a one-room tenement, inhabited by persons of both sexes and all ages. But the true born saint, whether rich or poor, is an uncommon variety of the human species.

*My Apprenticeship.* 1926.

## XI

### ARNOLD BENNETT

#### i. An Italian Bank

[Arnold Bennett is well known as a novelist and playwright of the first rank, and his novels of the life of the "Five towns" are justly celebrated for their consummate realism and artistic restraint. He possessed to a remarkable degree the power of close and accurate observation in combination with the ability to record his observations with clarity and fidelity. It is these qualities which make his revelations of himself, in his *Journals* and in his *Truth about an Author*, both of immediate interest and also of permanent value.]

AN English bank is inhuman or godlike. Its attitude towards ordinary customers implies that it is conferring a favour upon them by doing business with them at all and that they ought to consider themselves indeed a fortunate lot. It cannot or will not recognize that it is a mere shop for the sale of monetary facilities, and that there are rival shops. That it exists for the convenience of its customers, and not vice versa, is an idea which apparently seldom occurs to it. Sometimes, however, by firmness, the recognition of this important fact can be obtained. I once desired to carry out a perfectly usual transaction with a bank. The manager asked me to go and see him. I

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refused. He came to see me. He permitted himself to remark that I was living in a rather large house. I permitted myself to suggest that he was just possibly getting away from the point. The transaction was executed immediately. And I have often heard tales from customers who knew exactly what they wanted and exactly how much they were prepared to pay for it, and who succeeded in rendering bank managers human. It is fair to say that English banks are as a rule business-like and rapid in their methods.

Now French and Italian banks are human. They are very human. I have done plenty of business with French and Italian banks. Yesterday I went into a typical large branch of an Italian bank ; and everything happened according to precedent. Italian banks close from 12 to 2. Such a system would not work in England, but it works smoothly enough in both Italy and France. At ten minutes past two the numerous staff comes strolling casually in from its lunch, smoking cigarettes. Italian bank-clerks seem to be unable to do business without tobacco. And why should they do business without tobacco ? Tobacco is humanizing. Their manners are exquisite ; their charm is notable.

At the first guess I went to the right counter, behind which some half-dozen clerks were more or less busy in a cubicle. I presented a cheque—not a foreign cheque, but one of the Bank's own cheques. I furnished evidence of identity. I was most urbanely received. The entire half-dozen young males showed a friendly interest in me. Then I said, "I want this money in English sterling."

## AN ITALIAN BANK

"*Sterlina!*!" exclaimed the youth attending to me, astounded. "Ah! We must go upstairs."

He escorted me upstairs to another and a vaster room. He telephoned to the cashier downstairs: "Have we fifty pounds in sterling?" A pause. The clerk smiled. Yes, the Bank had in its coffers fifty pounds in sterling. Then began the filling up of forms, with carbon duplicates. A tremendous affair. My full name, the name of my father, my permanent domicile, where I had come from, where I was staying. Then I started to endorse the cheque, which required two separate signatures. With perfect tact, the clerk stopped me.

"Excuse me," said he. "The signature on the front of the cheque ought to have been written before you came into the Bank."

"But I will sign it in your presence," said I.

"Ah, sir! We have our rules." Then followed a long palaver among the staff.

"I must consult the Director," said he.

He departed to consult the Director, who presently arrived to see me. The manners of the Director were marvellous: a lesson to all Britons. They were comparable to those of the late Lord Chaplin, whose social deportment I have never seen equalled—in England. The Director agreed with me that I might perform the first signature in the Bank itself, and left me with an enchanting bow and smile. Then the second signature. Then more forms which had to be signed. The clerks were in continual consultation as to procedure.

"Now we will go down to the cashier," said my special clerk. "I will accompany you."

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We descended to the cashier. A third signature was demanded. In all, I wrote twelve signatures. But I got the sterling. I also got humaneness, charm, and courtesy. Also my affair had engaged the attention of eleven clerks and the supreme Director. At the close everybody appeared to be very pleased, and relieved. On everybody's face was an indication that a miracle had been accomplished. I myself felt that a miracle had been accomplished. True, it had taken thirty-three minutes : but a miracle it was. I went forth into the hot blinding sunshine of nearly three o'clock. All this happened in an illustrious city where tourists are as common as flies ; and in my view it was quite as interesting as any of the city's storied monuments.

### 2. Verona

Juliet's home-town, I suppose some would call it. The phrase takes the edge off romance, and I designed it to do so, determined as I am somehow to vent my rage at being shown Juliet's house, a picturesque and untidy tenement, with balconies certainly too high for love, unless Juliet was a trapeze acrobat, accustomed to hanging head downwards by her toes.

This was not Juliet's house, for the sufficient reason that so far as authentic history knows, there never was any Juliet. It seems that Shakespeare took the story of Juliet from an Italian fiction, performing in the process his customary feat of making a silk purse out of a sow's ear ; and that he chose Verona for her

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habitation because of its agreeably sounding name. There not having been any Juliet, there could not have been any Juliet's house. Hence to label a building as Juliet's house, and to draw the special attention of simple-minded tourists to it as such, was an act of unscrupulous fraud, which the city authorities ought to have firmly and publicly disowned. The thing is as barefaced a swindle as the alleged tomb of Agamemnon at Mycenæ.

Still, Verona is not a mean city. The first view of the vast old reddish Castle, with superb bridge to match, after you have passed through its triple enclosure of walls, is exceedingly impressive. Also the place is unspoilt. It exists now as it did exist. The hoof-marks of the globe-trotter are not upon it. The streets are narrow, with very few new monuments, and without vistas. (True, the traffic is directed by policemen with white batons, derived doubtless from London via Paris via Rome and Milan.) The main street is forbidden to all wheeled traffic. The famous Herb Market, where the original frescoes on the façades of the houses largely survive, makes a truly romantic spectacle. The one defect of the Herb Market is that the supply therein of the modern staff of life—I mean oranges—is both insufficient and inferior.

And the citizens are unspoilt children of the Renaissance, ingenuous, provincial, violent in face and mien, unpolluted yet by their brief contacts with the touristic horde ! We were the only Anglo-Saxons to lunch at a purely Italian restaurant under the immense arcade of the old Bourse, where the waiters dashed to and fro in ordinary suits, arguing with one another, and being charmingly

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explanatory to their strange guests. We took coffee at the best hotel, and tea at the other best hotel ; and both were pretty third-rate—according to touristic conventions. I liked that, especially as the tea was good and the coffee was good. You seldom or never get a first-rate hotel in an unspoilt town. First-rate hotels arise on the ruins of the primitive.

I was pleased, too, to see that no concerted effort had been made to utilize socially or touristically the fearsome river Adige, on which the city is situated. Not a terrace on its banks ; not a café with a river view. Evidently the citizens regard the swift-flowing Adige merely as an impossible stream. They have imprisoned its turbulent water between granite walls, and then just left it to rafts and lumbermen. The principal open-air cafés are all in an inner square, where you can see girls walking and officers walking (Verona is the headquarters of an army-corps) and the inhabitants behaving naturally and self-unconsciously, as they do in Seville.

At the lunch hour there is an enormous rushing outbreak of bicycles, which though dangerous to limb are less so than automobiles and belong more to the historic past. Neither English nor French is spoken in the dark and cavernous shops. And as for the Post Office, which you reach by a splendid balustraded stone staircase in a splendid courtyard, it may be called Renaissance in its routine as in its architecture. The employees appear to say to each other : “ Funny thing ! Here’s somebody wanting a money-order ! What next, I wonder ! ” All which is delightful and touching, in homeopathic doses. The huge

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Roman gateway, the huge Roman amphitheatre—well, you can study them if you so desire. The inhabitants negligently tolerate them. And if you have been travelling a lot, you yourself are as sick of gateways and amphitheatres as of churches. I remember an old retired wealthy industrial Frenchman remarking : “ Italy would be tolerable if it were not for its public monuments.”

You leave Verona, after your first visit, with an impression of tremendous beating sunshine and of a general higgledy-piggledyness. The people have the phlegmatic indifference of Englishmen at home. They may just have heard of Shakespeare. If they have heard of the fabled Juliet they assuredly set her down as a wanton wench, imperfectly guarded, who deserved all she got from destiny.

We visited the old reddish Castle, after a merciful fate had prevented us from seeing the museum of modern pictures. Its barbaric interiors well illustrate the life of the great days of Verona. Wonderful it must have been that any man survived the age of thirty. The endless picture-galleries present the usual appearance of all foreign galleries except the finest. Twilight everywhere. The pictures dirty, and underframed and oddly labelled. Several Mantegnas of the second order. A Bellini ditto. A first-rate portrait by Titian. . . . And then you see a sculptured Virgin and Child, the Child with its finger in its mouth. It is labelled Donatello, and probably no one but Donatello could have done it. An enchanting work. A gem. The sight of it transforms the

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whole of Verona, makes Verona richly worth while. It completely changes one's attitude towards Verona as a centre of art. Unhappily it is crumbling to pieces, uncared for. But the citizens of Verona will bear this misfortune with an admirable tranquillity.

One church, San Zeno Maggiore, in a squalid suburb, had to be inspected, no matter how serious your surfeit of churches. It has the reputation of being the finest Romanesque church in North Italy, with the oldest bronze doors, and it possesses a celebrated and large Mantegna picture, the Madonna Enthroned. Impossible to keep out of this renowned church, which was begun in the eleventh century—and too conscientiously restored in the late nineteenth.

The Mantegna was worthy of its legend ; the Roman and Egyptian pillars in the crypt, in which lie the immortal remains of San Zeno, fisherman and bishop, were exciting ; the whole building had style. But the most interesting phenomenon in the great church was the guide, who captured my affections to the extent of ten lire. This extremely unusual guide had learnt no lesson by rote. He talked vivaciously in both Italian and French, and at once communicated to you his personal passionate enthusiasm for the marvels under his charge. He begged you to stay as long as you liked in any spot you liked. He knew when to be silent. He had none of the usual guides' air of having designed, built, and decorated the fane with his own brain and hands. He talked as an artist might talk. Were all guides as the guide at the church of San Zeno, I would be ready to revisit every public monument in Italy.

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I have met his equal only once—when I chartered a taxi in Hanover Square and asked the driver to drive me to St. Bartholomew's. The driver's face immediately irradiated by the mere mention of that name. He drove me to St. Bartholomew's. He knew it by heart. And he knew all the other City churches by heart. He was a fervent amateur of City churches. And as I left him, with reluctance, in Hanover Square again, his smile indicated that in his opinion I had been conferring a favour on him by learning from him. The world is full of strange, lovable characters.

Once in the bar of a French seaside hotel the barman was mixing a Bacardi cocktail for me. Now I had previously seen this barman trying the violin of the leader of the orchestra which at night enlivened the bar. He played the violin with decidedly more emotional quality and with a more beautiful tone than the leader of the orchestra himself. "So you play the fiddle," I ventured, in English. "The fiddle?" he questioned. "The violin," I corrected myself. "Ah, yes, the violin!" "You are from Paris?" I asked. "No, sir, I am Hungarian." He sighed. Discretion, a sense of decency, forbade me to ask him: "If you play the violin, and so well, why are you behind a bar mixing a Bacardi cocktail for me?" A day or two later I learnt from somebody else that despite his passion for, and proficiency upon, the fiddle, the young man's real ambition was to be a dentist, and that he had already passed the preliminary examination at Geneva to this great end.

## 3. Crossing the Alps

Never having accomplished this feat before, and thinking thoughts of Hannibal and Napoleon, I approached the region, in the direction opposite to Napoleon's, not without secret excitement. It was exceedingly hot in Turin. It was exceedingly hot on all the long straight roads leading to those notorious mountains, and as soon as we began to climb them, it grew still hotter. The radiator of the car reached boiling-point again and again, and had to be refreshed by icy water transferred into it from roadside brooklets by means of my hat. Otherwise the upward journey was simplicity; notable only for the numbers of cataracts and torrents, and of small companies of cows in charge of children. The road was conceived by Napoleon's engineers in a broad-minded spirit; the epithet "generous" has been well applied to its hairpin bends. The gradients are severe, and consistently severe, for miles, but any modern car would take them with perfect nonchalance; and the surfaces are excellent.

I imagined that something worse would come; I was apprehensive wrongly. After a brief stretch of steady ascent, we perceived that the Alpine summits were strangely close to us; indeed, so close, in the thin clear air, that it seemed as if by putting out an arm one might touch the great patches of snow on them. The sunny heat was still intense, but there lurked under that caressing warmth some kind of a chill menace. Also here and there by the roadside ran short tunnels—avalanche-galleries for the protection of way-

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farers, and at intervals were refuge-huts established by mountaineering societies for the needs of adventurous persons caught by the night or the storm. All of which struck one as odd, and perhaps disconcerting. No danger whatever, in the July sun ; and yet deadly danger was waiting, hidden amid those peaks, ready to pounce down upon travellers in other seasons and weather. One had an irrational sensation of insecurity.

Then an official warning stopped us : warning not of death but of the Italian Customs, alert to examine the possessions with which we were attempting to leave the country. Difficult to believe that we were already practically at the top of the pass, but we were, and 6,000 feet in the skies. After all, what is 6,000 feet ? The whole city of Johannesburg is as high, and no one thinks twice about it. The chief of the customs came out to me in the car, and spoke in English, and I shook hands, being made instantly aware that he had ideas on English literature which he was anxious to express to a writer. He expressed these with unsurpassable courtesy, and I expressed one or two of mine with British clumsiness, and we parted. The too brief interview was charming and highly ceremonious. I would have talked on ; but no, he could not dream of delaying us, and with bows he re-entered his office which was also his home. I have often thought of him since, eagerly studying all manner of British authors, and those authors not in the least aware that his Latin eye was upon them, peering critically down from the Alpine eyrie.

In a few minutes we came to a large, low building that resembled a fortress. We went in

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at one gate and out at another, and though soldiers were wandering around none accosted us. We assumed that we were in France. And we passed also a large tarn ; not a boat on it, not an angler on its banks ; and for good reason. The mere look of its pale blue water appreciably lowered the thermometer which every one carries in his heart. In winter the lake must be frozen very thick. It was the most deserted, frightening, useless thing you ever saw.

Somewhere either before or after this—I forget ; the frontier arrangements are confusing and incomprehensible—we had to stop again and go into a wretched ramshackle cottage, where three Italian officials gazed at us sternly, inspected passports, and asked for detailed information on topics not referred to in the illustrated passports. Our parents, long since dead, were exhumed for their curiosity. And one of the officials, seated at a rickety small table amid the squalor of the bare room, wrote down our history and the history of our parents, with a foul pen ; and as he knew little French and no English, he certainly got the history all wrong ; and anyhow nobody would ever read his historical work. This original research occupied a long, long time.

We foresaw that if the French officials were equally laborious we should arrive nowhere for lunch. But there were no similar French officials, and I assume that the Italians, by some fraternal concord, were acting for two great nations and not one only. The Locarno spirit ! We ran swiftly over perfect surfaces down easy descents for twenty minutes into indubitable heat, and were congratulating ourselves on a complete emergence

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from the dark moral oppression of officialdom, when at a little town, Lanslebourg, an official automatically applied our brakes for us by stepping in front of the car. The French customs, miles off any frontier ! Still later we reached Modane, and more heat, and saw railways and the disappearance of a railway into the flank of a mountain. Burrowing through the Alps presented itself as a much more formidable business than climbing over them. Crossing the Alps may have daunted Hannibal and Napoleon ; but to us it was nothing. We had crossed them, and interviewed literary critics and official historians and soothed the carping mood of other officials, all in a couple of hours.

I should be interested to learn why the Mont Cenis tunnel is so called. It certainly does not run under Mont Cenis, nor anywhere near Mont Cenis.

*Journal. 1929.*

## XII

### DOROTHY PILLEY

#### Climbing in North Wales

[Dorothy Pilley (Mrs. I. A. Richards) is prominent among the Englishwomen who delight in the fascinating sport of mountaineering. Her *Climbing Days* is an example of a memoir devoted to one special aspect of life. It is a record of her adventures as a mountaineer, and the story of her experiences as a climber is always full of interest and excitement.]

LONG ago a young soldier gave a school-girl a novel with a vivid description of the Brenva Route of Mont Blanc—modelled on Moore's account in his Diary. The knife-edge ice ridge, the desperate night on the slope, the earlier pictures from *Running Water* of the Pavillon de Lognan and the Aiguille d'Argentière mingled in her mind with fairy-tale Glass Mountains, Mountains of the Moon, K'un Lun Western Paradises—abodes of ice-princesses from which ordinary mortals are dragged back by the hair. A strange, now unrecapturable farrago of fantasies, remaining perhaps a vague haunting background to all my mountain experiences.

The first entry of these dreams into actuality came with a visit to Beddgelert. In place of the pleasant family holidays by the sea—the espla-

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nades, the sands, the young "nuts" with their ties and canes, the warblings of the fair young tenor at the Pierrots, in his beautifully creased white flannels and 'Varsity blazer—came the grey village street, the tawny blotches of the bracken, the reeds swaying in the breeze round the shores of Llyn Danas, the smell of the moss and the peat. What did it matter that we went up Craig-y-Llan in long skirts and in what the boot-sellers regard as feminine walking boots? We found our way down by the mine-shafts in the dark. It was like waking up from a half sleep with the senses cleared, the self released. It was as if I had never seen anything before to strike me as beautiful. The Aberglaslyn Pass seemed the limiting possibility of awful grandeur. Sheer rock walls were edged with sentinel trees in dark silhouette against the sky. Wordsworth does not exaggerate at all; the hills, the cliffs, the cataracts haunt the mind that first gives itself to them "like a passion." I was distraught by the feelings that arose. They came with a shock of utter newness upon me, and a mossy rock would stare at me like a stranger until nothing in the world seemed to matter, except my desperate attempts to discover what its significance could be. Hours passed trying to describe, in a note-book, the flowing water, clear, softly lipping over stones with a chase of fleecy foam-mice running out from under them over amber and cat's-eye depths. They were both a joy and a pain, an endless excitement and an endless disappointment. I was helpless before these feelings and knew my helplessness.

The visit culminated in a stupendous ascent of Snowdon. It was all due to a grandfatherly

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schoolmaster, bearded and Ruskinesque, with a flock of thirty little boys. To us all, the ascent of the highest mountain in England and Wales was a terrifying feat. Our bearded senior fortunately had Alpine experience to comfort us, but when, on reaching the narrow saddle just below the Llechog ridge (as Baedeker might say "fit only for adepts with strong heads"), he developed vertigo and could go no farther, our sense of adventure was redoubled. Breathlessly we scampered up to the summit. Idle to pretend I remember the view. All that comes to the mind is a memory of effort and achievement, intoxicating ginger-beer at fourpence a bottle, a picture of our old friend sitting on the slope by the saddle, and the exact forms of the grey spiky rocks about him with the moss between them.

Next year in the spring the mountains had their chance to lay hold of me for good. Work with the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association and an attempt to become an Egyptologist led to a two-months rest. Hieroglyphics had been too much for the eyes. With a small cottage in Beddgelert as our base, my school friend, Winifred Ellerman, a tireless and imaginative walker, and I ranged the surrounding mountains. On Moel Hebog, when we reached the last shale slope, we halted—not knowing whether it was not the safest plan to crawl over the slippery surface on all fours. It seemed to us we should slide down with the whole mountain. What moments of terror we enjoyed! After trying it gingerly we walked up boldly, to be welcomed as courageous mountaineers by hotel acquaintances on the summit. A fateful meeting, for we were invited to make

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with them the circuit of the Moel Wynns over to Festiniog and back—which we counted thirty miles. After this we were singled out as “indefatigables.” Herbert Carr, then beginning his very active and enterprising climbing career, asked us to come with him up a *real* climb—the Y Gully and Notch Arête of Tryfan. Tryfan, the grim guardian of the upper Nant Ffrancon, the rockiest peak south of the Tweed and the only Welsh mountain that cannot be climbed without using the hands ; what a chance ! I knew then that I should be for ever grateful to him. Never shall I forget my breathless anticipations. All night I lay sleepless with excitement.

As we rounded the bend of the road above Capel Curig and first caught sight of it, I remember trembling with delight and fear. The two summit rocks (ten feet high) were to me, as to so many others before and after me, two humans spell-bound in eternal conversation. I was told that they were called Adam and Eve and that a climber’s duty was to spring lightly from one to the other. I asked naïvely (I have since blushed to recall) why one should not be content with ascending the mountain by the easiest route. The question to the non-climber or “mere walker” seems natural and proper enough ; but I was soon to learn the climber’s answer. In fact, from that day on, “climbing” was to become a word with a specialized meaning not to be used just for walking up steep slopes. The climber speaks generally of “going up Snowdon” when he follows the zigzags of the path, and “climbs” only when he uses his hands as well as his feet.

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When I got out of the car by the tenth milestone from Bangor on the Ogwen lakeside—for the first of how many times?—the mountain seemed to hang over our heads. We wound up the boulder-strewn slope to the foot of the climb and then I made my first acquaintance with scree. Harmless substance enough but singularly terrifying to the uninitiated. The mountaineer knows that if he jumps on to that rock scrap-heap it will slide with him about a foot and then settle down till he jumps again. But the beginner feels sure that he will start sliding and never stop till he lies a mangled body at the bottom. So the heroes of Crockett or Rider Haggard novels have their most ghastly escapes on scree-slopes. And years later I recall that an American friend, after coming gallantly and recklessly up an east-face climb on Tryfan, halted at this very scree funnel, to declare that it “sure was a mighty mean slope to fall down.”

This danger past, the climb that followed showed no terrors. It was a journey full of discoveries as to how well the body fits the rocks, how perfectly hand- and foot-hold are apportioned to the climber’s needs. I was later to find out that this was a peculiarity of Tryfan rather than of climbing as practised by modern experts. In the exhilaration of these discoveries the climb seemed over before it had properly started. I felt like a child when the curtain goes down at the pantomime. Why hadn’t I enjoyed it ten times more while it was on? Every moment was glorious and as quickly gone. The cold wind was whistling round Adam and Eve by the time we reached the summit. It persuaded half the party

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to walk down to the car. Herbert Carr and I descended the South Gully and, undamped, rushed off in the dusk to scramble up the wind-swept Bristly Ridge, that comes down Glyder Fach to Bwlch Tryfan, and make our way over to Pen-y-Gwyrd. If we had conquered the hardest climb in the district we could not have rejoiced more. "Mountain madness" had me now for ever in its grasp.

Followed four days of ecstatic climbing in perfect weather. Bluebells were in the woods and ranunculus in the swamps as we passed on our way up to the cliffs. They were lovely beyond belief ; but my thoughts were mainly on *footholds* and *handholds*. Each *pitch* or passage of the climb seemed as important as the Battle of Waterloo. The Horseshoe of Snowdon for the first time, the Parson's Nose, the Crazy Pinnacle Gully on Crib Goch, and a day on the Nantle Y Garn, were each, as a member of the party was fond of repeating, "a day which will live." Y Garn gave a lesson which was to prove useful. It is a mountain with a bad reputation for large, loose, treacherous blocks. In 1910 Anton Stoop, the brilliant young Swiss climber, was killed there. He was lowering himself over a huge block that two heavier men had first descended without its showing signs of danger. It heeled out with him and carried him down helpless. Knowing this story, we treated everything with our utmost care. Nevertheless, just as the party left a terrace of poised blocks, one of them, like a slice out of a cheese, slid away without warning. The crash and the sulphurous smell shook us violently and reaffirmed the need for caution.

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After this I was alone in the hills for some weeks. It was now impossible for me to keep away from the high ridges. I wandered round the Horseshoe of Snowdon alone and with any party that would follow me. Greatly venturing, I went up "Lockwood's Chimney," a dark chasm under Pen-y-Gwryd, alone. With what wild glory in my heart did I wriggle out of the hole and find myself in the sunlight on the giddy upper wall. I induced a large, not too willing party of novices to come up the Great Gully of Clogwyn-y-Garnedd after me. By this time I had become the proud possessor of an Alpine rope (from Beale's, with a red strand through it!). How I had studied all the particulars about its strength in George Abraham's *The Complete Mountaineer*. How ashamed I was of its brilliant newness ; it had to be muddied at all costs. A first pair of climbing boots shine like twin stars in memory, too. They were large, much too heavy and too high in the leg, but the whole village used to come to see them. I still did not dare to go about Beddgelert without a skirt, and was rather balloony in a thick, full pair of tweed knickerbockers under a billowy tweed skirt which I put in the sack at the foot of the climb. I was particularly careful never to hide it under a rock, having read of Mrs. Aubrey Le Blond's adventure on the Rothorn. How I admired that great woman climber's exploit. To traverse the Rothorn from Zermatt nearly down to Zinal and then—discovering that her skirt had been left on the summit—to go all the way back again and down to Zermatt to round the day off ! What an exemplar to contemplate when the ridge of Crib-y-Ddysgl seemed long and narrow in the windy morning.

## CLIMBING IN NORTH WALES

June came and a week's leave for Herbert Carr. We were both more full of enthusiasm and energy than ever. Our joint ambition, we hardly dared to whisper it, was the conquest of Lliwedd. It is impossible, now that Lliwedd climbs have become such well-known ground, to recapture all the awe and fascination which hung about them then. Though from the shores by Llydaw on any cloudy day the gloom of those black precipices can still daunt the heart. The water laps against the boulders in an inhuman, endless song. The wind streaks the surface with thin lines of foam. Across Llydaw, a loose strip of rusty corrugated-iron roof bangs drearily in the gusts and a sheep baas as though in anguish. There in the hollow of the Cwm the dark smooth walls of Lliwedd tower up. The men who made those steeps their playground seemed to me a race of giants—mysterious beings hardly of this world, undauntable, diamond-nerved, and steel-sinewed. Many a time I had peered down from the sharp crest, to shudder at the curve of its terrific slabs. To the lay eye there seems no room for a human foot upon it. That men could have worked their way up by scores of routes was incredible. Most of all when clouds swept down from Y Wyddfa and the gulf under the crags seemed bottomless. The precipice of Lliwedd then might be ten instead of merely one thousand feet high.

But there were no clouds about when we set out. It was hot walking in my thick tweeds across the green slopes above the lake. The long swamp grass rustled dry underfoot ; the sunlight cut out the ribs of the cliff above the Horned Crag, showing the Terminal Arête in sharp definition

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against the blackness of the shadowed gullies. We came into the shade on the litter of scree at the foot as though into a cave of secluded mysteries. Lliwedd from here heels over—like a *Titanic* just about to take its plunge. The immense parallel sweeping lines of its buttresses, echoed by every one of their scores of minor ridges, tilt over together. This heel does not disguise the steepness of the cliff, it gives it indeed an extra touch of loftiness (as of a ship's spars) from the scree and is one of the secrets of the mountain's hold on the imagination. Climbing on it you can never for a moment forget where you are. We put on the rope and set to work somewhere on the West Peak. I doubt if I could find the exact point to-day.

It was the first time we had been on ground which felt really *steep*. Or rather, it altered our conception of steepness for us. On Tryfan you halt on ample ledges—places where you can walk about and sit down with a choice of comfortable positions. On Lliwedd, for long stretches at a time, when you halt you have to stand where your feet are, for there is nowhere else to put them. Or this at least is the novice's impression—on the harder routes of the East Peak an exact one. As we mounted, the sense of the scale of Lliwedd gained on us. We felt like tiny insects lost among the vertical immensities about us. All went well, the excitement of achievement blended with the radiance of the day. Crib Goch across Llydaw swam in a haze of sunlight; and when we came, after hours that had seemed like minutes, to a pleasant grassy nook that invited us to pause for rest and lunch, there could have been few happier

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beings in the world than we. The main difficulties were overcome. Above was easier climbing at a gentle angle. We seemed to have done what we had set out to do.

When we had eaten and smoked we went on. I had become an avid reader of the famous Climbers' Club Pocket Guide-books to the Welsh Crags, and phrases from that master of terse description, Archer Thompson, were always echoing in my memory. One of them about "belaying the rope around a stuck of bollards" wandered from nowhere into my mind just then. It was well that it did so. Herbert was cautiously mounting a steep rib built of massive blocks. A tempting bollard adorned my ledge, and acting more in the spirit of Thompson's phrase than from particular apprehension I had cast a turn of the rope around it. Herbert was to my right and about fifteen feet above me.

Just as he clasped the crest of a block with both arms—somewhat in the monkey-up-a-stick position—the block yielded and heaved out with him clinging to it. How he managed to disengage himself from it I hardly saw. The physical sensation of horror, a quick but heavy pulse of sickness, flashes through one almost before one sees what is happening. Then, as though all feeling had been plucked away, a clear mental calmness follows. I had time to cry "My God! Look out!" before the block thundered down the cliff with Herbert after it. He hit my ledge and rebounded outwards, disappearing backwards from my view over the edge. Though I held him, the rope ran a little through my hands, leaving a white burn-scar that lingered on my palms for

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weeks. Quickly though these things happen, they seem in passing to be almost leisurely. One has time to take in the rope, time to think whether there is anything more one should do, time to decide that there is nothing, time to reflect that if the *belay* holds all will be well, and that if not . . . time to perceive with complete and vivid particularity the whole scene—the greenness of the grass ledge, the shape of the lurching boulder and the movement of the falling man, the play and course of the rope cutting into the turf edge. Time for all this and for a pause of anguished expectancy in which to wonder just how bad what has happened will turn out to be. The pause was broken by a small voice that seemed to come from very far away saying, "I'm all right!"

He was not all right by any means. Somehow with some pulling he managed to get up to my ledge, white and shaking but composed and self-possessed. Then we could see what the damage was. One leg was broken, the shin-bone being exposed for five inches. Fortunately the bleeding was slight. What proved worse was a bad sprain to the ankle. For a while he rested on the ledge. We had no brandy flask and an orange was the best I could provide as a restorative. The sleeves of the white blouse I used to sport in those days came in usefully as bandages.

But the time came when our further movements had to be planned and undertaken. With great courage and resolution, Herbert insisted on leading up the remaining four hundred feet. He thought my climbing-experience still too little to deal with such loose terrain. We were more than half-way up the cliff, no one within sight or hearing.

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Fortunately the day was long. The leg was less painful on the way up the cliff where it could be dragged than on the way down the endless slopes into Cwm-y-Llan. I can recall all the struggle, the coming out into the sunlight at the summit—Snowdon in a dreamy distance above us—the agonizing progress down into the Cwm, Herbert using me as a crutch. After a long while we reached a stream where we bathed the leg and I went on to telephone to a doctor and fetch a car. I recall all this and going up again at dusk to fetch him in, and then a blank of oblivion falls.

In the eyes of those not infected with mountain madness this episode should have put a proper and summary end to my climbing aspirations. And, in fact, strong parental and other influences were marshalled to prohibit them. I was forbidden to climb again. Beddgelert shook its head. The lack of all proper perspective shown in such climbing enthusiasm was pointed out to me. But in vain! After his six weeks in splints my climbing partner and I, with keenness unabated, were at it again. Even before Herbert was on his crutches, I was out on the rocks with his father. And each evening I would look in to cheer the invalid with stories of the day's doings and he, in imagination, would be sharing the climbs. The instant he was well enough, such was his ardour, he would come out to shout ribald comments to us from the Ogwen Road, as we struggled with the Milestone Buttress.

*Climbing Days.* 1935.

## XIII

### LORD OXFORD AND ASQUITH

#### Women and Politics

[Lord Oxford and Asquith, better remembered, perhaps, as Mr. H. H. Asquith, sprang from middle class, Liberal, nonconformist, Yorkshire stock. He had a distinguished career at school and university (he was a scholar of Balliol), and followed this by an equally distinguished career at the Bar and in Parliament. One of the greatest Parliamentary leaders since Gladstone and Disraeli, he was Prime Minister from 1908 to 1916, a period of great storm and stress. One of the distinguishing features of a noble career was his loyalty to his Parliamentary colleagues and to his friends generally.]

IN these days of triumphant Feminism, when women have stormed one after another the out-works and in the end penetrated into the citadel of Sex Domination, the question whether their real influence in politics has grown or diminished may seem to admit of but one reply. I have witnessed almost all the stages of the campaign. I have been throughout an advocate of the admission of women on the same terms as men to professional and business callings and to the discharge of administrative functions in municipal and local affairs. As far back as 1892, when I came to the Home Office, I was the first Secretary

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of State to open the Factory Inspectorate to women against the almost unbroken hostility of my expert advisers. On the other hand, I was, until near the close of the War, a strenuous opponent of the extension of the political franchise to women. I gave the reasons for my change of attitude in a speech in the House of Commons on March 28, 1917. It was after the Speaker's Conference, which was called at my suggestion in October, 1916, had reported in favour of "some measure of Woman Suffrage."

I had always pointed out that, if and when the change were made, it must, sooner or later, be carried to its legitimate conclusions, which the more timid of the Suffragists were loath to face: the assimilation in all material conditions of the male and female franchise, and the eligibility of women to the House of Commons. Having once ruled out the principle of sex discrimination on the vital issue, you cannot consistently or fairly re-introduce it in what are after all subordinate matters. The result of the removal of the illogical restrictions by which the grant of the franchise was clogged must inevitably be to make the women a majority of the whole parliamentary electorate. And admission to the House of Lords can hardly any longer be denied to ladies who, if they belonged to the other sex, would sit there by an hereditary title.

This apparent victory of women all along the line is not, in practice, so significant as it sometimes seems both to enthusiasts and to pessimists. Women do not in fact now, and probably never will, vote *en bloc* and as a class. And the experts in electioneering tell us that with very rare

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exceptions, in any average constituency, a female candidate is handicapped by her sex.

These, however, are for the most part speculations as to a conjectural and still uncertain future. We are on more solid ground when we seek to estimate the relative influence which individual women have exercised upon politicians and on the course of government in our own times as compared with other eras in English public life. It is not necessary, nor would it be in any way instructive, to go back to the days of Queen Anne. She presided at Cabinets, and her personality was a real factor in the choice both of Ministers and policies ; but she was swayed, this way and that, by the capricious interplay of the cajoleries and intrigues of female favourites. Nor need one recall the power exercised by Mrs. Howard, and much more effectively by Queen Caroline in the days of George II. The most successful masters of the House of Commons in the eighteenth century—Walpole, the two Pitts, Lord North—were none of them under the personal influence of women. The frigidity of the younger Pitt was a favourite theme with the coarser of the Whig epigrammatists and ballad-makers, and there is only one authentic instance in his biography of his succumbing to the commonest frailty of mankind. He seems really to have been in love with Eleanor Eden, the daughter of Lord Auckland. He was then (1796) at the height of his fame and power : he had been twelve years Prime Minister, and was still well under forty. But his private debts were already so formidable that both he himself and the lady's father seem to have thought marriage out of the question.

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Nevertheless, the influence of the Great Ladies was in Pitt's time a factor in politics. The Whig Opposition was in this matter better equipped than the Ministerialists. The liveliest picture, both of the persons concerned and their ways and methods, is to be found in the incomparable letters of Lady Bessborough,<sup>1</sup> herself, with her more famous elder sister, the beautiful Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire,<sup>2</sup> not only an observant and interested onlooker, but playing from time to time a not inactive part in the varied and often brilliant scene. A generation later, the Princess Lieven, the Russian Ambassadress, and Mrs. Norton were much in the confidence of leading statesmen of the day.

When the Victorian age arrived, the Queen herself became, after her apprenticeship under Lord Melbourne, a potent and sometimes, with the guidance during his lifetime of Prince Albert, a dominating figure. Her Letters show with what thoroughness she kept herself informed even of the details of administration and policy, and how frequent was her intervention whether by way of warning, of remonstrance, or of encouragement. She had strong personal partialities and antipathies. So far as one can judge after the death of Sir Robert Peel, she liked none of her Prime Ministers until after years of suspicion and mistrust she succumbed to the spell of Disraeli.

Among those Prime Ministers there were two—Palmerston and Gladstone—who may fairly be

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Granville Leveson-Gower: Private Correspondence.* Edited by Castalia, Countess Granville (1916).

<sup>2</sup> They were daughters of the first Lord Spencer. According to Lady Hester Stanhope, Lady Bessborough "had ten times more cleverness than her sister the Duchess."

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said to have made their wives their intimate political confidantes. Each of these wrapped herself up with unfailing, and for the most part uncritical, devotion in her husband's career. Lady Palmerston's social gifts and her complete command of all the arts and technique of the *Salon* made her an active and most efficient co-partner in Palmerston's fortunes. She could also on occasion hit out fiercely but shrewdly in her husband's defence. On his dismissal from the Foreign Office by Lord John Russell in January, 1852, she writes to her brother :

John has behaved shamefully ill to Palmerston. No doubt the Queen and Prince wanted to get Palmerston out and Granville in, because they thought he would be pliable and subservient, and would let Albert manage the Foreign Office, which is what he had always wanted. . . . John has behaved like a little blackguard. . . . I am still vexed and provoked at the whole thing, but I take it much more calmly. It is so lucky for an effervescent woman to have such a calm and placid husband, which no events can irritate or make him lose his temper (*sic*).<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Disraeli used to say : " Dizzy married me for my money, but if he had the chance again he would marry me for love." She was a woman of little cultivation and less tact ; but she had the kindest of hearts, and is credited by Mr. Buckle with the gifts both of feminine intuition and of judgment. Curiously enough, Mr. Gladstone had a warm friendship for her. It was, in all essentials,

<sup>1</sup> Guedalla : *Palmerston*, pages 324-325.

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a most successful marriage, but in no real sense a political partnership. Lord Beaconsfield survived his wife, and the letters, published in Mr. Buckle's *Life*, show that in his later years there were few political secrets that he kept back from Lady Bradford.<sup>1</sup>

Among the propagandists of the movement for the emancipation of women, of whom John Stuart Mill was the intellectual pioneer, the example of the Queen was a great asset as disproving the familiar gibe that the inherent incapacities of the sex disabled them from taking a place side by side with men in the transaction of serious affairs. The case of George Eliot was another of their most telling *argumenta ad feminam*. She was then at the height of her fame : sober critics like Richard Hutton placed her on the same level as our greatest creative writers in the past,<sup>2</sup> and many quiet supporters of things as they existed were disconcerted by the baffling inquiry on what ground they denied to George Eliot the vote which was given to her gardener.

The memory of Jane Austen, and the living instances of Charlotte Brontë, Mrs. Browning, George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, not to dwell on those prime favourites of the circulating libraries—Miss Braddon, Mrs. Henry Wood, Miss Yonge, and later Ouida and Miss Rhoda Broughton,<sup>3</sup> un-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Somervell aptly quotes from *Lothair* : "Three-score years and ten at the present day is the period of romantic passions." (*Disraeli and Gladstone*, page 292.)

<sup>2</sup> See Miss Haldane's *George Eliot and Her Times* (1927).

<sup>3</sup> Miss Broughton, whose friendship I enjoyed, exclaimed when her popularity began to wane : "I began by being the Zola and I have now become the Charlotte Yonge of English fiction." She once told me that she had seen on the bookstall at Newcastle Station a pile of second-hand novels, tied up with a string, with the inscription : "Rhoda Broughton—soiled and cheap."

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doubtedly had a powerful effect on Victorian opinion in helping to bring to a close the era of what Mill described as the "Subjection of Women." Perhaps a more potent cause was the opening of the platform to female oratory. Long before the militant excesses of the "Suffragettes" the cause of the enfranchisement of woman had found, among the sex, advocates who could hold their own on the platform with the best male speakers. In the 'eighties and 'nineties there was an imposing and constantly recruited array of such standard-bearers and missionaries. Mrs. Fawcett, Lady Frances Balfour, Lady Henry Somerset—to name only a few—not only displayed extraordinary gifts of persuasive dialectic and moving eloquence, but they achieved what their mothers, and in those days the large majority of "their sisters and their cousins and their aunts," would have regarded as an unseemly, because an "unwomanly" triumph: they gradually trained the stolid masculine audience at political meetings to regard the spectacle of women sitting on the platform—sometimes in the chair—moving resolutions and even amendments, not with a silent conventional curtsey and smile, but with flights of rhetoric and flashes of humour, as part of the normal machinery of a "demonstration" or a "rally."<sup>1</sup>

I will only add, as I may, without lifting the veil of necessary reserve, that there can never have been a politician who owed more than I have done to the wise counsels, the unfailing

<sup>1</sup> George Eliot, though she had "many friends of the so-called advanced school," when feminism was starting on its new lines of progress, was almost angry at the "rather tactless suggestion" from one of them that she should take to the platform. (Miss Haldane, page 307.)

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courage, and the ever-vitalizing companionship of a wife.

One of the most curious episodes in the history of popular agitation was the campaign organized and carried on between 1909 and 1914 by the militant wing of the supporters of woman suffrage, who went by the nickname of "Suffragettes."

Upon the question of the grant of the franchise to women both political parties were divided, and the situation was the same in the Cabinet. I myself, Lord Loreburn, Mr. Lewis Harcourt, and others were opponents, and Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Haldane, and Mr. Lloyd George were supporters of the change. In these circumstances it was impossible for the Government as a Government to make it part of their programme, and a succession of private members' Bills were introduced. They made no progress, and on the eve of the second general election in 1910 I promised on behalf of the Government "to give facilities for effectively proceeding with a Bill which is framed so as to admit of free amendment." In the end a Bill dealing with various matters connected with the franchise was introduced by the Government, with the avowed intention of allowing the enfranchisement of women to be raised and settled by a free vote in Committee. A number of amendments in that sense were put down, and were believed by us and by all parties concerned to be in order. To the universal surprise the Speaker (January, 1913) ruled that they were outside the scope of the Bill and must be dealt with in a separate measure. I immediately stated that in view of the pledges we had given we should not deem it right to proceed with the

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Franchise Bill, which was therefore withdrawn. I added that we would offer facilities for a private member's Bill in the succeeding session, as to which members of the Government would be free to vote at every stage as they saw fit.

This was accepted by the leading supporters of the woman's cause in the House of Commons as the best way of dealing with the question. But it was regarded by the militant suffragists outside as a trick, and as far as their representatives in the House were concerned, as a betrayal of their cause. They demanded nothing short of the introduction of a Government measure.

The "campaign" had begun by the organized disturbance of meetings, of which Mr. Lloyd George's famous meeting at Limehouse on July 30, 1909, was an early example. A climax was reached when in September the same year I went to Birmingham to address a huge demonstration in the Bingley Hall on the Veto of the House of Lords. The following account from a local newspaper is a substantially accurate narrative of what occurred :

The city gave the appearance on this occasion of being in a state of siege, for barricades were erected everywhere the Prime Minister was expected to go, and on his arrival at the station he was smuggled into the adjoining hotel in the luggage lift. The extraordinary precautions taken to exclude Suffragettes from the Bingley Hall were successful, but two of them . . . succeeded in reaching an adjoining roof, from which point of vantage they hurled slates and

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other missiles into the street below, and on to the roof of the hall. They were eventually dislodged with the assistance of a fire-hose.

The next stage was marked by the resort to open violence by stone-throwing and personal assaults. "These earliest manifestations of distinctive militancy," says a sympathetic writer,<sup>1</sup> "were largely of a symbolic character intended to typify the strength of the movement." She no doubt had in view such incidents as a visit which I paid to Liverpool, when "two suffragettes disguised themselves as coster-girls and succeeded in getting near Mr. Asquith, and one of them contemptuously tossed an empty bottle into a car from which he had just alighted." But such "symbolic manifestations" as these were soon exchanged for others of a more practical kind.

I had my full share of their attentions. In July, 1912, I went to Dublin to speak at the Theatre Royal, which two or three of the militant ladies attempted to set on fire the day before the meeting. I was driving with my wife and Mr. John Redmond in an open carriage through the crowded streets of Dublin at night, when a woman on the pavement threw a hatchet at us. It was no doubt intended for me, but it was badly aimed, and struck Mr. Redmond on the cheek. A little later, while I was engaged in trying to hole a putt on the links at Lossiemouth, two young women pounced upon me, and were driven off by my daughter, niblick in hand. The same year I was driving with my hostess to unveil a statue to Campbell-

<sup>1</sup> *Woman's Effort, 1865-1914*, by A. E. Metcalfe (1917): a curious book.

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Bannerman at Stirling. As we were passing Bannockburn the carriage was held up by a band of women, armed with bags of red pepper, with which they sprinkled us, while one of them tried to belabour me with a dog-whip. The author already cited, remarks that "on both occasions arrests were made, but the matter was allowed to drop." She adds that visits which I made the same autumn to Birmingham, Leeds, and Manchester were the occasion for the militants to attack pillar-boxes, to spread false fire-alarms, and to set fire to a football-stand and other forms of property.

The third and last stage was reached after the withdrawal of the Franchise Bill in January, 1913. "Up to this point," says the historian of the movement, "there had been isolated cases of arson." (For instance, a woman attempted in 1912 to set fire to the children's quarters at Nuneham House, Mr. Harcourt's country residence.) "Now . . . the agitation took on a far more serious phase. . . . They determined to engage in militancy of a kind that would produce the maximum effect compatible with the retention of their individual liberty for so long as possible. With this deliberate twofold intention the campaign of arson began."<sup>1</sup> The same authority has been at the pains to collect from the newspapers the number of reported cases of arson in 1913 and 1914—some of them of a most serious character—and comments with apparent complacency on the few arrests that were made. During the same time numerous attempts were made to slash or deface works of art in the public galleries and museums,

<sup>1</sup> *Woman's Effort*, 1865-1914, page 242.

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with the result that by way of precaution no fewer than fifteen galleries were closed.

The women who took part in these insensate outrages did not, of course, belong to the criminal class. They were for the most part genuine fanatics, with something of the temper of the martyr. How to deal with them, and at the same time give effectual protection to person and property, was a problem which taxed the ingenuity of successive Home Secretaries, and the most experienced officers of the police and the prisons. Forcible feeding and the "Cat and Mouse Act" were expedients which were repugnant to everybody, and most of all to those who were directly concerned in their administration. Militancy ceased with the outbreak of War. On August 11, 1914, Mr. McKenna announced that he had advised His Majesty to remit the remainder of the prisoners' sentences. "His Majesty," he said, "was confident that they could be trusted not to stain the cause they had at heart by any further crime or disorder."

Thereupon they were unconditionally released, and thereafter they kept the peace.

*Memories and Reflections.* 1928.

## XIV

### MARGOT ASQUITH

#### Some Portraits of Statesmen

[Lady Asquith was the second wife of the Earl of Oxford and Asquith. In her youth she was famous as one of the wittiest and most brilliant women in London society. She has given us the story of her varied life in a memoir which Mrs. Sidney Webb considers to be "a document, owing to its frankness, of great value to the sociologist." Lady Asquith herself thought that "As well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb" would be no unfitting motto for the work.]

LORD ROSEBERY was born with almost every advantage: he had a beautiful smile, an interesting face, a remarkable voice, and natural authority. When at Oxford, he had been too much interested in racing to work and was consequently sent down—a punishment shared at a later date and on different grounds by another distinguished statesman, the present Viscount Grey—but no one could say he was not industrious at the time that I knew him, and a man of education. He made his fame first by being Mr. Gladstone's chairman at the political meetings in the great Midlothian campaign, where he became the idol of Scotland. Whenever there was a crowd in the streets or at the station, in either Glasgow or Edinburgh, and

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I inquired what it was all about, I always received the same reply :

“Rozbury!”

I think Lord Rosebery would have had a better nervous system and been a happier man if he had not been so rich. Riches are over-estimated in the Old Testament : the good and successful man receives too many animals, wives, apes, she-goats, and peacocks. The values are changed in the New : Christ counsels a different perfection and promises another reward. He does not censure the man of great possessions, but He points out that his riches will hamper him in his progress to the Kingdom of Heaven and that he would do better to sell all ; and concludes with the penetrating words :

“Of what profit is it to a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?”

The soul here is freedom from self.

Lord Rosebery was too thin-skinned, too conscious, to be really happy. He was not self-swayed like Gladstone, but he was self-enfolded. He came into power at a time when the fortunes of the Liberal party were at their lowest ; and this, coupled with his peculiar sensibility, put a strain upon him. Some people thought that he was a man of genius, morbidly sensitive, shrinking from public life and the Press, cursed with insufficient ambition, sudden, baffling, complex, and charming. Others thought that he was a man irresistible to his friends and terrible to his enemies, dreaming of Empire, besought by kings and armies to put countries and continents straight, a man whose notice blasted or blessed young men of letters, poets, peers, or politicians, who at once

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scared and compelled every one he met by his freezing silence, his playful smile, or the weight of his moral indignation ; the truth being that he was a mixture of both.

Lord Salisbury told me he was the best occasional speaker he had ever heard ; and certainly he was an exceptionally gifted person. He came to Glen constantly in my youth and we all worshipped him. No one was more alarming to the average stranger or more playful and affectionate in intimacy than Lord Rosebery.

Sir William Harcourt ought to have lived in the eighteenth century. To illustrate his sense of humour : he told me that women should be played with like fish ; only in the one case you angle to make them rise and in the other to make them fall. He had a great deal of wit and nature, impulsive generosity of heart and a temperament that clouded his judgment. He was a man to whom life had added nothing ; he was perverse, unreasonable, brilliant, boisterous, and kind when I knew him ; but he must have been all these in the nursery.

At the time of the split in our party over the Boer War, when we were in opposition and the phrase "methods of barbarism" became famous, my personal friends were in a state of the greatest agitation. Lord Spencer, who rode with me nearly every morning, deplored the attitude which my husband had taken up. He said it would be fatal to his future, dissociating himself from the pacifists and the Pro-Boers, and that he feared the Harcourts would never speak to us again. As I was devoted to the latter, and to their son

## SOME PORTRAITS OF STATESMEN

Lulu<sup>1</sup> and his wife May—still my dear and faithful friends—I felt full of apprehension. We dined with Sir Henry and Lady Lucy one night, and found Sir William and Lady Harcourt were of the company. I had no opportunity of approaching either of them before dinner, but, when the men came out of the dining-room, Sir William made a bee-line for me. Sitting down, he took my hand in both of his and said :

“ My dear little friend, you need not mind any of the quarrels ! The Asquith evenings or the Rosebery afternoons, all these things will pass ; but your man is the man of the future ! ”

These were generous words, for, if Lord Morley, my husband, and others had backed Sir William Harcourt instead of Lord Rosebery when Gladstone resigned, he would certainly have become Prime Minister.

I never knew Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman well, but whenever we did meet we had great laughs together. He was essentially a *bon vivant*, a *boulevardier*, and a humorist. At an official luncheon given in honour of some foreign Minister, Campbell-Bannerman, in an admirable speech in French—a language with which he was familiar—described Arthur Balfour, who was on one side of him, as *l'enfant gâté* of English politics, and Chamberlain, who was also at the lunch, as *l'enfant terrible*.

On the opening day of Parliament, February 14, 1905, he made an amusing and telling speech. It was *à propos* of the fiscal controversy which was raging all over England, and which was destined

<sup>1</sup> The present Viscount Harcourt.

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to bring the Liberal party into power at the two succeeding general elections. He said that Arthur Balfour was "like a general who, having given the command to his men to attack, found them attacking one another ; when informed of this, he shrugs his shoulders and says that he can't help it if they will misunderstand his orders ! "

In spite of the serious split in the Liberal Party over the Boer War, involving the disaffection of my husband, Grey, and Haldane, Campbell-Bannerman became Prime Minister in 1905.

He did not have a coupon election by arrangement with the Conservative Party to smother his opponents, but asked Henry, before he consulted any one, what office he would take for himself and what he thought suitable for other people in his new Cabinet. Only men of a certain grandeur of character can do these things, but every one who watched the succeeding events would agree that Campbell-Bannerman's generosity was rewarded.

When C.B.—as he was called—went to Downing Street, he was a tired man ; his wife was a complete invalid and his own health had been undermined by nursing her. As time went on, the late hours in the House of Commons began to tell upon him, and he relegated more and more of his work to my husband.

One evening he sent for Henry to go and see him at 10 Downing Street, and, telling him that he was dying, thanked him for all he had done, particularly for his great work on the South African constitution. He turned to him and said :

" Asquith, you are different from the others,

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and I am glad to have known you. . . . God bless you!"

C.B. died a few hours after this.

I now come to another Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour.

When Lord Morley was writing the life of Gladstone, Arthur Balfour said to me :

"If you see John Morley, give him my love, and tell him to be bold and indiscreet."

A biography must not be a brief either for or against its client, and it should be the same with an autobiography. In writing about yourself and other living people you must take your courage in both hands. I had thought of putting as a motto on the title-page of this book, "As well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb"; but I gave it up when my friends gave me away and I saw it quoted in the newspapers.

If I have written any words here that wound a friend or an enemy, I can only refer them to my general character, and ask to be judged by it. I am not tempted to be spiteful, and have never consciously hurt any one in my life; but in this book I must write what I think without fear or favour and with a strict regard to unmodelled truth.

Arthur Balfour was never a standard-bearer. He was a self-indulgent man of simple tastes. For the average person he was as puzzling to understand and as difficult to know as he was easy for me and many others to love. You may say that no average man can know a Prime Minister intimately; but most of us have met strangers whose minds we understood and whose hearts we

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reached without knowledge and without effort ; and some of us have had an equally surprising and more painful experience when, after years of love given and received, we find the friend upon whom we had counted has become a stranger.

He was difficult to understand, because I was never sure that he needed me, and difficult to know intimately, because of his formidable detachment. The most that many of us could hope for was that he had a taste in us as one might have in clocks or china.

Mr. Balfour was blessed or cursed at his birth, according to individual opinion, by two assets : charm and wits. The first he possessed to a greater degree than any man, except John Morley, that I have ever met. His social distinction, exquisite attention, intellectual tact, cool grace, and lovely bend of the head made him not only a flattering listener but an irresistible companion. The disadvantage of charm—which makes me say cursed or blessed—is that it inspires every one to combine and smooth the way for you throughout life. As the earnest housemaid removes dust, so all his friends and relations keep disagreeable things from his path ; and this gave him more leisure in his life than any one ought to have.

His wits, with which I say that he was also cursed or blessed—quite apart from his brains—gave him confidence in his improvisings and the power to sustain any opinion on any subject, whether he held the opinion or not, with equal brilliance, plausibility, and success, according to his desire to dispose of you or the subject. He either finessed with the ethical basis of his intellect, or had none. This made him un-

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intelligible to the average man, unforgivable to the fanatic, and a god to the blunderer.

On one occasion my husband and I went to a lunch given by old Mr. McEwan, to meet Mr. Frank Harris. I might have said what my sister Laura did, when asked if she had enjoyed herself at a similar meal, "I would not have enjoyed it if I hadn't been there," as, with the exception of Arthur Balfour, I did not know a soul in the room. He sat like a prince—with his sphinx-like imperiousness to bores—courteous and concentrated on the languishing conversation. I made a few gallant efforts; and my husband, who is particularly good on these self-conscious occasions, did his best . . . but to no purpose.

Frank Harris, in a general disquisition to the table, at last turned to Arthur Balfour and said, with an air of finality :

"The fact is, Mr. Balfour, all the faults of the age come from Christianity and journalism."

To which Arthur replied with rapier quickness and a child-like air :

"Christianity, of course . . . but why journalism?"

When men said, which they have done now for over thirty years, that Arthur Balfour was too much of a philosopher to be really interested in politics, I always contradicted them. With his intellectual taste, perfect literary style and keen interest in philosophy and religion, nothing but a great love of politics could account for his not having given up more of his time to writing. People thought that he was not interested because he had nothing active in his political aspirations; he saw nothing that needed changing. Low

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wages, drink, disease, sweating, and overcrowding did not concern him ; they left him cold, and he had not the power to express a moral indignation which he was too detached to feel.

He was a great Parliamentarian, a brilliant debater, and a famous Irish Secretary in difficult times, but his political energies lay in tactics. He took a Puck-like pleasure in watching the game of party politics, not in the interests of any particular political party, nor from esprit-de-corps, but from taste. This was conspicuous during the fiscal controversy in the years of 1903 to 1906, but any one with observation could watch this peculiarity carried to a fine art wherever and whenever the Government to which he might be attached was in a tight place.

Politically, what he cared most about were problems of national safety. He inaugurated the Committee of Defence and appointed as its permanent Chairman the Prime Minister of the day ; everything connected with the size of the army and navy interested him. The size of your army, however, must depend on the aims and quality of your diplomacy ; and, if you have Junkers in your Foreign Office and jesters on your War Staff, you must have permanent conscription. It is difficult to imagine any one in this country advocating a large standing army plus a navy, which is vital to us ; but such there were and such there will always be. With the minds of these militarists, protectionists, and conscriptionists, Arthur Balfour had nothing in common at any time. He and the men of his opinions were called the Blue Water School ; they deprecated fear of invasion, and in consequence were violently

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attacked by the Tories. But, in spite of an army corps of enthusiasts kept upon our coasts to watch the traitors with towels signalling to the sea, with full instructions where to drive the county cows to, no German army during the Great War attempted to land upon our shores, thus amply justifying Balfour's views.

The artists who have expressed with the greatest perfection human experience, from an external point of view, he delighted in. He preferred appeals to his intellect rather than claims upon his feelings. Händel in music, Pope in poetry, Scott in narration, Jane Austen in fiction, and Sainte-Beuve in criticism, supplied him with everything he wanted. He hated introspection and shunned emotion.

What interested me most and what I liked best in Arthur Balfour was not his charm or his wits—and not his politics—but his writing and his religion.

Any one who has read his books with a searching mind will perceive that his faith in God is what has really moved him in life; and no one can say that he has not shown passion here. Religious speculation and contemplation were so much more to him than anything else that he felt justified in treating politics and society with a certain levity.

*The Autobiography of Margot Asquith. 1920-22.*

## XV

### WINSTON CHURCHILL

#### Fisher and Wilson

[Winston Churchill, the celebrated son of a celebrated father, Lord Randolph Churchill, may justly claim to have played many parts in his varied career. He has been soldier, war correspondent, novelist, biographer (his biography of his father ranks high among English biographies), Conservative, Liberal, and then again Conservative. He was very prominent among the politicians responsible for Britain's policy during and immediately after the Great War ; and his record of the *World Crisis* may perhaps be looked upon as a defence of the policy he then adopted.]

I FIRST met Lord Fisher at Biarritz in 1907. We stayed for a fortnight as the guests of a common friend. He was then First Sea Lord and in the height of his reign. We talked all day long and far into the nights. He told me wonderful stories of the navy and of his plans—all about dreadnoughts, all about submarines, all about the new education scheme for every branch of the navy, all about big guns, and splendid admirals and foolish miserable ones, and Nelson and the Bible, and finally the island of Borkum. I remembered it all. I reflected on it often. I even remembered the island of Borkum when my teacher

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had ceased to think so much of it. At any rate, when I returned to my duties at the Colonial Office I could have passed an examination on the policy of the then Board of Admiralty.

For at least ten years all the most important steps taken to enlarge, improve, or modernize the Navy had been due to Fisher. The water-tube boiler, the "all big gun ship," the introduction of the submarine ("Fisher's toys," as Lord Charles Beresford called them), the common education scheme, the system of nucleus crews for ships in reserve, and latterly—to meet the German rivalry—the concentration of the fleets in home waters, the scrapping of great quantities of ships of little fighting power, the great naval programmes of 1908 and 1909, the advance from the 12-inch to the 13.5-inch gun—all in the main were his.

In carrying through these far-reaching changes he had created violent oppositions to himself in the navy, and his own methods, in which he gloried, were of a kind to excite bitter animosities, which he returned and was eager to repay. He made it known, indeed he proclaimed, that officers of whatever rank who opposed his policies would have their professional careers ruined. As for traitors, *i.e.* those who struck at him openly or secretly, "their wives should be widows, their children fatherless, their homes a dunghill." This he repeated again and again. "Ruthless, relentless, and remorseless" were words always on his lips, and many grisly examples of admirals and captains eating out their hearts "on the beach" showed that he meant what he said. He did not hesitate to express his policy in the most unfavourable terms, as if to challenge and

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defy his enemies and critics. "Favouritism," he wrote in the log of Dartmouth College, "is the secret of efficiency." What he meant by "favouritism" was selection without regard to seniority by a discerning genius in the interests of the public; but the word "favouritism" stuck. Officers were said to be "in the fish-pond"—unlucky for them if they were not. He poured contempt upon the opinions and arguments of those who did not agree with his schemes, and abused them roundly at all times both by word and letter.

In the Royal Navy, however, there were a considerable number of officers of social influence and independent means, many of whom became hostile to Fisher. They had access to Parliament and to the Press. In sympathy with them, though not with all their methods, was a much larger body of good and proved sea officers. At the head of the whole opposition stood Lord Charles Beresford, at that time Commander-in-Chief of the Channel or principal fleet. A deplorable schism was introduced into the Royal Navy, which spread to every squadron and to every ship. There were Fisher's men and Beresford's men. Whatever the First Sea Lord proposed the Commander-in-Chief opposed, and through the whole of the Service captains and lieutenants were encouraged to take one side or the other. The argument was conducted with technicalities and with personalities. Neither side was strong enough to crush the other. The Admiralty had its backers in the Fleet, and the Fleet had its friends in the Admiralty: both sides therefore had good information as to what was passing in

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the other camp. The lamentable situation thus created might easily have ruined the discipline of the navy but for the fact that a third large body of officers resolutely refused, at whatever cost to themselves, to participate in the struggle. Silently and steadfastly they went about their work till the storms of partisanship were past. To these officers a debt is due.

There is no doubt whatever that Fisher was right in nine-tenths of what he fought for. His great reforms sustained the power of the Royal Navy at the most critical period in its history. He gave the navy the kind of shock which the British army received at the time of the South African War. After a long period of serene and unchallenged complacency, the mutter of distant thunder could be heard. It was Fisher who hoisted the storm-signal and beat all hands to quarters. He forced every department of the Naval Service to review its position and question its own existence. He shook them and beat them and cajoled them out of slumber into intense activity. But the navy was not a pleasant place while this was going on. The "Band of Brothers" tradition which Nelson had handed down, was for the time, but only for the time, discarded ; and behind the open hostility of chieftains flourished the venomous intrigues of their followers.

I have asked myself whether all this could not have been avoided ; whether we could not have had the Fisher reforms without the Fisher methods ? My conviction is that Fisher was maddened by the difficulties and obstructions which he encountered, and became violent in the

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process of fighting so hard at every step. In the government of a great fighting service there must always be the combination of the political and professional authorities. A strong First Sea Lord, to carry out a vigorous policy, needs the assistance of a Minister, who alone can support him and defend him. The authority of both is more than doubled by their union. Each can render the other services of supreme importance when they are both effective factors. Working in harmony, they multiply each other. By the resultant concentration of combined power, no room or chance is given to faction. For good or for ill what they decide together in the interests of the Service must be loyally accepted. Unhappily, the later years of Fisher's efforts were years in which the Admiralty was ruled by two Ministers, both of whom were desperately and even mortally ill. Although most able and most upright public men, both Lord Cawdor and Lord Tweedmouth, First Lords from 1904 to 1908, were afflicted with extreme ill-health. Moreover, neither was in the House of Commons and able himself, by exposition in the responsible Chamber, to proclaim in unquestioned accents the policy which the Admiralty would follow and which the House of Commons should ratify. When in 1908 Mr. McKenna became First Lord, there was a change. Gifted with remarkable clearness of mind and resolute courage, enjoying in the prime of life the fullest vigour of his faculties, and having acquired a strong political position in the House of Commons, he was able to supply an immediate steady influence. But it was too late for Fisher. The Furies were upon his track. The

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opposition and hatreds had already grown too strong. The schism in the navy continued, fierce and open.

The incident which is most commonly associated with the end of this part of his career is that of the "Bacon letters." Captain Bacon was one of the ablest officers in the navy and a strong Fisherite. In 1906 he had been serving in the Mediterranean under Lord Charles Beresford. Fisher had asked him to write to him from time to time, and keep him informed of all that passed. This he did in letters in themselves of much force and value, but open to the reproach of containing criticisms of his immediate commander. This in itself might have escaped unnoticed; but the First Sea Lord used to print in beautiful and carefully considered type, letters, notes, and memoranda on technical subjects for the instruction and encouragement of the faithful. Delighted at the cogency of the arguments in the Bacon letters, he had them printed in 1909 and circulated fairly widely throughout the Admiralty. A copy fell at length into hostile hands, and was swiftly conveyed to a London evening newspaper. The First Sea Lord was accused of encouraging subordinates in disloyalty to their immediate commanders, and Captain Bacon himself was so grievously smitten in the opinion of the Service that he withdrew into private life, and his exceptional abilities were lost to the navy, though, as will be seen, only for a time. The episode was fatal, and at the beginning of 1910 Sir John Fisher quitted the Admiralty and passed, as every one believed, finally into retirement and the House of Lords, crowned with achievements,

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loaded with honours, but pursued by much obloquy, amid the triumph of his foes.

As soon as I knew for certain that I was to go to the Admiralty I sent for Fisher: he was abroad in sunshine. We had not seen each other since the dispute about the naval estimates of 1909. He conceived himself bound in loyalty to Mr. McKenna, but as soon as he learned that I had had nothing to do with the decision which had led to our changing offices, he hastened home. We passed three days together in the comfort of Reigate Priory.

Although my education had been mainly military, I had followed closely every detail of the naval controversies of the previous five years in the Cabinet, in Parliament, and latterly in the Committee of Imperial Defence; and I had certain main ideas of what I was going to do and what, indeed, I was sent to the Admiralty to do. I intended to prepare for an attack by Germany as if it might come next day. I intended to raise the Fleet to the highest possible strength and secure that all that strength was immediately ready. I was pledged to create a War Staff. I was resolved to have all arrangements made at once in the closest concert with the military to provide for the transportation of a British army to France should war come. I had strong support from the War Office and the Foreign Office; I had the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer at my back. Moreover, every one who knew the crisis through which we had passed had been profoundly alarmed. In these circumstances it only remained to study the methods, and to choose the men.

I found Fisher a veritable volcano of knowledge

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and of inspiration ; and as soon as he learnt what my main purpose was, he passed into a state of vehement eruption. It must indeed have been an agony to him to wait and idly watch from the calm Lake of Lucerne through the anxious weeks of the long-drawn Agadir crisis, with his life's work, his beloved navy, liable at any moment to be put to the supreme test. Once he began, he could hardly stop. I plied him with questions, and he poured out ideas. It was always a joy to me to talk to him on these great matters, but most of all was he stimulating in all that related to the design of ships. He also talked brilliantly about admirals, but here one had to make a heavy discount on account of the feuds. My intention was to hold the balance even, and while adopting in the main the Fisher policy, to insist upon an absolute cessation of the vendetta.

Knowing pretty well all that has been written in the preceding pages, I began our conversations with no thought of Fisher's recall. But by the Sunday night the power of the man was deeply borne in upon me, and I had almost made up my mind to do what I did three years later, and place him again at the head of the Naval Service. It was not the outcry that I feared ; that I felt strong enough at this time to face. But it was the revival and continuance of the feuds ; and it was clear from his temper that this would be inevitable. Then, too, I was apprehensive of his age. I could not feel complete confidence in the poise of the mind at seventy-one. All the way up to London the next morning I was on the brink of saying "Come and help me," and had he by a word seemed to wish to return, I would surely have

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spoken. But he maintained a proper dignity, and in an hour we were in London. Other reflections supervened, adverse counsels were not lacking, and in a few days I had definitely made up my mind to look elsewhere for a First Sea Lord.

I wonder whether I was right or wrong.

For a man who for so many years filled great official positions and was charged with so much secret and deadly business, Lord Fisher appeared amazingly voluminous and reckless in correspondence. When for the purposes of this work and for the satisfaction of his biographers I collected all the letters I had received from the Admiral in his own hand, they amounted when copied to upwards of three hundred closely type-written pages. In the main they repeat again and again the principal naval conceptions and doctrines with which his life had been associated. Although it would be easy to show many inconsistencies and apparent contradictions, the general message is unchanging. The letters are also presented in an entertaining guise, interspersed with felicitous and sometimes recondite quotations, with flashing phrases and images, with mordant jokes and corrosive personalities. All were dashed off red-hot as they left his mind, his strong pen galloping along in the wake of the imperious thought. He would often audaciously fling out on paper thoughts which other people would hardly admit to their own minds. It is small wonder that his turbulent passage left so many foes foaming in his wake. The wonder is that he did not shipwreck himself a score of times. The buoyancy of his genius alone supported the burden. Indeed, in the process of years the profuse and imprudent

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violence of his letters became, in a sense, its own protection. People came to believe that this was the breezy style appropriate to our guardians of the deep, and the old Admiral swept forward on his stormy course.

To me, in this period of preparation, the arrival of his letters was always a source of lively interest and pleasure. I was regaled with eight or ten closely-written double pages, fastened together with a little pearl pin or a scrap of silken ribbon, and containing every kind of news and counsel, varying from blistering reproach to the highest forms of inspiration and encouragement. From the very beginning his letters were couched in an affectionate and paternal style. "My beloved Winston," they began, ending usually with a variation of "Yours to a cinder," "Yours till Hell freezes," or "Till charcoal sprouts," followed by a PS. and two or three more pages of pregnant and brilliant matter. I have found it impossible to re-read these letters without sentiments of strong regard for him, his fiery soul, his volcanic energy, his deep creative mind, his fierce outspoken hatreds, his love of England. Alas ! there was a day when Hell froze and charcoal sprouted and friendship was reduced to cinders ; when "My beloved Winston" had given place to "First Lord : I can no longer be your colleague." I am glad to be able to chronicle that this was not the end of our long and intimate relationship.

Sir Arthur Wilson, the First Sea Lord, received me with his customary dignified simplicity. He could not, of course, be wholly unaware of the main causes which had brought me to the

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Admiralty. In conversation with the other Sea Lords when the well-kept secret of my appointment first reached the Admiralty, he said, "We are to have new masters: if they wish us to serve them, we will do so, and if not, they will find others to carry on the work." I had only met him hitherto at the conferences of the Committee of Imperial Defence, and my opinions were divided between an admiration for all I heard of his character and a total disagreement with what I understood to be his strategic views. He considered the creation of a War Staff quite unnecessary: I had come to set one up. He did not approve of the War Office plans for sending an army to France in the event of war: I considered it my duty to perfect these arrangements to the smallest detail. He was, as I believed, still an advocate of a close blockade of the German ports, which to my lay or military mind the torpedo seemed already to have rendered impossible.<sup>1</sup> These were large and vital differences. He on his side probably thought we had got into an unnecessary panic over the Agadir crisis, and that we did not properly understand the strength and mobility of the British Fleet nor the true character of British strategic power. He was due to retire for age from the Service in three or four months, unless his tenure had been extended, while I, for my part, came to the Admiralty with a very clear intention to have an entirely new Board of my own choosing. In these circumstances our association was bound to be bleak.

<sup>1</sup> The close blockade of the German ports was prescribed in the war orders of 1909, during Lord Fisher's term of office. Sir Arthur Wilson did not reveal any modification which he had made in consequence of new conditions to any one.

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This is, however, the moment for me to give an impression of this striking naval personality. He was, without any exception, the most selfless man I have ever met or even read of. He wanted nothing, and he feared nothing—absolutely nothing. Whether he was commanding the British Fleet or repairing an old motor car, he was equally keen, equally interested, equally content. To step from a great office into absolute retirement, to return from retirement to the pinnacle of naval power, were transitions which produced no change in the beat of that constant heart. Everything was duty. It was not merely that nothing else mattered. There was nothing else. One did one's duty as well as one possibly could, be it great or small, and naturally one deserved no reward. This had been the spirit in which he had lived his long life afloat, and which by his example he had spread far and wide through the ranks of the navy. It made him seem very unsympathetic on many occasions, both to officers and men. Orders were orders, whether they terminated an officer's professional career or led him on to fame, whether they involved the most pleasant or the most disagreeable work ; and he would snap his teeth, and smile his wintry smile to all complaints and to sentiment and emotion in every form. Never once did I see his composure disturbed. He never opened up, never unbent. Never once, until a very dark day for me, did I learn that my work had met with favour in his eyes.

All the same, for all his unsympathetic methods, “Tug,” as he was generally called (because he was always working, *i.e.* pulling, hauling, tugging), or alternatively “old ‘Ard ‘Art,” was greatly loved

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in the Fleet. Men would do hard and unpleasant work even when they doubted its necessity, because he had ordered it and it was "his way." He had served as a midshipman in the Crimean War. Every one knew the story of his V.C., when the square broke at Tamai in the Soudan, and when he was seen, with the ammunition of his Gatling exhausted, knocking the Dervish spearmen over one after another with his fists, using the broken hilt of his sword as a sort of knuckleduster. Stories were told of his apparent insensibility to weather and climate. He would wear a thin monkey-jacket in mid-winter in the North Sea with apparent comfort while every one else was shivering in great-coats. He would stand bareheaded under a tropical sun without ill-effects. He had a strong inventive turn of mind, and considerable mechanical knowledge. The system of counter-mining in use for forty years in the navy, and the masthead semaphore which continued till displaced by wireless telegraphy, were both products of his ingenuity. He was an experienced and masterly commander of a Fleet at sea. In addition to this, he expressed himself with great clearness and thoroughness on paper, many of his documents being extended arguments of exact detail and widely comprehensive scope. He impressed me from the first as a man of the highest quality and stature, but, as I thought, dwelling too much in the past of naval science, not sufficiently receptive of new ideas when conditions were changing so rapidly, and, of course, tenacious and unyielding in the last degree.

*The World Crisis, 1911-1918.* 1931.

## XVI

### THOMAS BURT

#### Mine and Prison

[Mr. Thomas Burt commenced work in the mine at ten years of age, and was one of the first trade unionists to represent the workers in Parliament. He was elected Member of Parliament for Morpeth in 1874, and represented that constituency continuously from then to 1918. He belonged to the days before the formation of a separate Labour Party, and it would be difficult to overestimate his services to the labour movement. As secretary to the Northumberland Miners' Association he gained the respect and esteem of people of all ranks in life. Between 1892 and 1895 he was Secretary to the Board of Trade in the Gladstone and Rosebery ministries.]

TOWARDS the end of our stay at Seaton Delaval, about the middle of 1859, the usual happy relations which had subsisted between employers and workmen were seriously interrupted. The differences arose mainly in connection with what was known as "the separation system." This system was then in general operation throughout the Northumberland collieries, and was a fruitful source of disturbance and conflict. By agreement, the hewer was paid only for large, or round, coal, the small being separated and left underground. If small coal was filled up with the round a fine was inflicted, or, in aggravated cases, the tub was

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wholly confiscated. Obviously some check was needed, or a careless, dishonest workman would have sent the small away with the round, and would thus have cheated his employer. But the system itself was faulty, and encouraged, if it did not invite, deception and fraud. The most honest, careful hewer often found at the end of a hard day's work that he had been deprived of half his earnings by the "laid-out," or confiscated, tubs, while, on the other hand, the careless or fraudulent worker not infrequently escaped scot-free.

The ordinary fines or forfeitures, severe and irritating though they were, probably would have proceeded without remonstrance or revolt; but suddenly, without notice, the manager adopted more drastic measures. Not satisfied with taking, without payment, the full value of the tub, which at Seaton Delaval at that time amounted to about sixpence, heavy fines ranging from 2s. to 3s. were inflicted. Complaint was instantly followed by dismissal from the colliery.

The term of service was then monthly, and regularly, when the fateful day, the ninth of the month, came round, batches of men were dismissed, as a rule the steadiest and most intelligent of the workmen being the victims. No general union then existed in Northumberland. At one or two collieries, notably at Cowpen and at Seaton Delaval, local unions were now and then started; but they were fitful and spasmodic, seldom continuing longer than a few weeks or a few months. On the part of the colliery-owners and managers there was great hostility to union. At Seaton Delaval every man who took a prominent part

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at meetings of the workmen, every one who acted as chairman or who was elected on deputations to the manager, became a marked man, and was speedily dismissed from the colliery.

It soon became difficult to induce any man who wished to retain his employment to accept the chairmanship of a meeting. Well do I remember one of the first meetings which I attended in my early coal-hewing days. There was seething discontent; the meeting-room was crowded almost to suffocation. One man after another was nominated as chairman, but all begged to be excused. There was a deadlock, when up jumped "Jimmy the Doctor," and delivered himself in something like this fashion: "What are ye all afraid of, men? Isn't it time something was done to put an end to the damned tyranny that is going on at this 'ere place? I knows well enough what's wanted; so do you. I 'opose and second that the gair comes up to-morrow. You that agree hold up your hands."

"Jimmy," nicknamed "the Doctor," whose real name I never knew, equal to the emergency, thus became at once chairman as well as mover and seconder of the resolution. He had recently arrived at Seaton Delaval from the Midlands, and, being a kind of bird of passage who flitted from place to place, burdened with no responsibility of wife or family, Jimmy had no fear of the manager's displeasure before his eyes.

Shortly afterwards the accumulating grievances reached a climax, and the comedy was changed into tragedy. A mass meeting was hastily convened, and after a sharp, heated debate, a resolution was carried by a narrow majority to stop the

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pit next day. This was distinctly a breach of contract. As the law then stood that offence subjected the employer to a moderate fine only, but when committed by the workman the penalty was three months' imprisonment, with hard labour. On the second day after the stoppage the village was startled by the evil news that nine workmen had been arrested by policemen during the night or in the early morning, while they were yet in bed, and hurried off to North Shields, there to be tried before the local magistrates for breach of contract.

Sure enough, the rumour was true. The process was carried through with every element of harshness and inhumanity. The victims were whisked off without ceremony. No time was allowed for breakfast or for them to procure the legal advice which a fair trial demanded. After a hasty examination—it would be a mockery to call it a judicial trial—eight of them were sentenced to two months' imprisonment in the county gaol at Morpeth. The names of the prisoners were Henry Ball, Anthony Bolam, Robert Burt (my uncle), Amos Etherington, Edward Davis, Wilson Ritson, Alec Watson, and Thomas Wakinshaw. Another miner, Thomas Beaney, was originally included, but he was subject to epileptic fits, and having been seized with one when before the magistrates, he was released.

My uncle's case was peculiarly hard. My aunt was seriously ill at the time—not expected to recover—and it was doubtful whether my uncle, after two months' absence, would ever see her alive again. She died, indeed, a week or two after the end of his imprisonment. Though a brave

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man of few words and little given to murmurings, he pleaded his wife's illness in mitigation of punishment. He was cynically reminded by the presiding magistrate that he should have thought of that before he broke his contract.

The prisoners' ages ranged from a little over twenty to between fifty and sixty. They were admittedly amongst the steadiest and best workmen on the colliery. Seven out of the eight were teetotallers, and the non-abstainer was a thoroughly temperate man. Five of them were members of the Primitive Methodist Connection, two of them, H. Bell and A. Etherington, being local preachers, and my uncle Robert a class leader and a Sunday-school teacher. For the time, and considering their lack of opportunity, they were men of exceptional intelligence. Wilson Ritson had the gift of ready, effective speech, which he used with tact and ability in his defence before the magistrates. He was a lover of books—especially fond of poetry. He lent me about this time a paper-backed copy of Bailey's *Festus*, which I read with great admiration.

Nearly all the men who were sent to gaol had opposed the strike. As a young hewer I attended the meeting and voted against the stoppage, and I well remember the earnestness with which my uncle argued and pleaded against hasty, extreme measures. When the manager was told that he had selected the most respectable and the most reasonable of his workmen for punishment—the very men who had most resolutely opposed the strike—his reply was that he was well aware of that, but they were the men who would most acutely feel the degradation of prison life, and

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they should have done more than give good advice; they should have gone to work notwithstanding that the majority was against them.

The governor of the prison soon discovered that the Delaval miners were very unlike the ordinary gaol-birds with whom he had to do. So far as the regulations and discipline of the prison allowed, he treated them with every consideration and kindness. During their term of imprisonment there was a little episode that probably stands alone in the records of prison life. On a certain afternoon there came to the prisoners an unexpected summons to attend chapel. This was a pleasant interlude in the dreary monotony of the day, and was welcomed by many who cared little for ordinary religious worship. It transpired that a visiting prison chaplain, who was on his rounds, had found his way to Morpeth. Of the merits of his sermon I know nothing; but when it came to an end the worthy chaplain and his motley congregation were surprised by a novel apparition. The venerable figure of Amos Etherington rose in one of the pews, and in calm, steady, well-chosen words he moved a cordial vote of thanks to the chaplain for his friendly visit and his excellent sermon. Another prisoner from Delaval duly seconded the resolution, which on being put to the assemblage was carried with hearty applause. The astonished chaplain accepted the thanks in the spirit in which they were tendered, and declared, no doubt truly enough, that though he had been a visiting prison chaplain for many years, this was a wholly new experience to him.

Innocent of any criminal intention and of any

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act which in its essence was of a criminal character, these men were hardly likely to feel that a blow had been struck at their manhood. Nevertheless, imprisonment and its associations must have been intensely repugnant to men of their habits and character. The "hard labour," which was part of their sentence, except that it was useless and profitless—mostly working the treadmill—perhaps did them no great harm; but the diet, the solitary confinement for so many hours every day, must have been very trying to men accustomed to an active life of severe physical exertion. Whatever may have been the cause, it is certain that upon some of them injuries were inflicted from which they never recovered. Henry Bell, then about twenty-four years of age, never afterwards enjoyed his usual robust health, and after lingering a few years he died, it was generally believed, from ailments contracted in the prison. He was a studious, bright young man, of great promise, who had already won considerable reputation in the locality for his power and eloquence as a local preacher.

The painful, cruel incidents here detailed could not well occur in our happier days. A strong, well-conducted union tackles and removes grievances as they arise, and a rash, impulsive strike in such circumstances is almost impossible. Were such a breach of contract by any chance to take place, it would be merely a civil offence, punishable by fine and not by imprisonment with hard labour.

Though there was no union at Delaval, the workmen acted honourably and generously towards those who had suffered in the general

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interest. The wives, families, and other dependents of their imprisoned comrades were liberally supported during the whole time that their bread-winners were in gaol. When the prisoners were liberated, they were welcomed home with great jubilation, and they were supplied with money to enable them to recuperate and to fit them for starting their hard work again.

A few weeks after the events I have just described, I received notice to leave Seaton Delaval. My uncles, Robert and Andrew Burt, together with some other miners, were discharged at the same time. There was nothing surprising in this, since on the ninth of every month similar missives were delivered to some of the workmen. We were sorry to leave the place. During our eight years' residence we had, on the whole, fared well. Delaval had given us many happy memories, many pleasant associations, and hosts of warm friends. To be driven away, rather than to go voluntarily, was not altogether agreeable; but in the temper which then prevailed among the higher officials there was no dishonour or stigma attached to dismissal.

My uncles were men of spirit and independence, quick in revolt against all tyranny and injustice. They took part in the miners' meetings, were often selected on deputations to the manager, and always spoke what they thought, strongly, clearly, and without equivocation. That they should be dismissed without ceremony was quite in keeping with the prevailing régime. But "What had their innocent nephew done?" they asked. A youth, then about twenty-two years of age, shy, retiring, unaggressive, whose relations

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with the colliery officials had always been friendly, it was certainly difficult to see what special claim I could have established to the honours of martyrdom. Hence my uncles urged me to see the manager with a view to ascertain the reasons for my dismissal, and to plead for its withdrawal. That I resolutely declined to do. Had I been conscious of error or offence it would have been easy for me to approach the manager and to offer explanation or apology. But I felt thus early that, however great the hardship might be, the dismissed workman, unless he knows he is at fault, cannot well, without indignity and humiliation, ask his employer for reasons, for explanations, or for remission. In truth I had no solid ground of complaint. Proper notice had been served according to agreement. Had I wished to leave, I should not have deemed myself under any obligation to say why, nor could I see what claim I had to demand from the manager why he discharged me.

Owing to the breakdown of my father's health I was now the responsible head of the house, and the duty therefore devolved upon me to seek work elsewhere. It was mid-winter, when the Northumberland coal-trade is usually at its worst, and when employment was often unobtainable. Was I to join the forlorn army of the unemployed? Few things in our chequered life are more pitiful, more dismal, than for a man who is able and willing to work to have to beg—and to beg in vain—of a “brother of the earth to give him leave to toil.” Happily that fate was not mine. This was but the second time in my life that I had gone in quest of work: first at ten years of age,

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when, as I have mentioned, against my parents' wish, I asked to be a trapper-boy, and now in early manhood, when I sought coal-hewing. So far as employment is concerned, I have never asked for anything except common hard work, and happily I have promptly obtained it. Everything else, of the nature of situation or appointment, has come to me unsought, unsolicited. This I count among the greatest boons of a life fraught with many blessings.

At the first place I tried—viz. Choppington Colliery—I immediately obtained employment for myself and my brother Peter, then a youth of eighteen years of age. My uncles got work at the same place, and thither we removed on New Year's Day, 1860, the manager of Seaton Delaval allowing us to leave before our month's notice had terminated. He and I parted good friends, and, in our final interview, he hinted that, for asking, I might have remained at the colliery.

*An Autobiography.* 1924.

## XVII

J. E. C. WELLDON

### Manchester and its Folk

[After a brilliant scholastic career at Eton and Cambridge, the Rev. J. E. C. Welldon became headmaster, first of Dulwich and then of Harrow. He worked successfully for some years as a schoolmaster, and was then made Bishop of Calcutta. On his return to England he was appointed a canon of Westminster, and then Dean of Manchester and later of Durham. He was particularly successful in his work in Lancashire.]

It is not altogether easy to decide whether the mutual ignorance between the North and the South of England is the cause or the effect of their estrangement. Certainly they know less, and perhaps care less, than might be expected about each other. London is, not unreasonably, self-centred in virtue of its predominant magnitude ; but it lacks the unity, and therefore in some sense the efficiency, of the great provincial cities. But if Londoners are often imperfectly acquainted with the parts of London itself and of its suburbs beyond their own residence or occupation, far less acquainted are they with the sentiments, interests, and conditions of life in the North. They live in detachment from the teeming industrial population upon which the prosperity of Great

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Britain and of London itself so largely depends. Personal names, which are household words in the North, are often unknown, or ignored, in the South of England. A South-countryman who migrates to the provinces finds that the metropolitan press has ceased to be an oracle, unless, indeed, as I have said, it is provincial as well as metropolitan. The *Times*, at least until it began to be sold for a penny, was not perhaps read by more than a narrow class of persons, such as frequent the social or political clubs, in a city like Manchester. It is such newspapers as the *Scotsman* in Edinburgh, the *Birmingham Post*, the *Liverpool Daily Post*, the *Yorkshire Post*, perhaps above all the *Manchester Guardian*, which largely form public opinion outside London and in the provinces.

If London is upon the whole ignorant of Manchester, it must be admitted that Manchester sometimes retaliates with equal ignorance of London. The indifference of local public opinion to the influence or example of the Metropolis is, in Lancashire, a striking phenomenon. It has often been a surprise to me to find how many of my daily companions in the tramcars have never, or have hardly, seen the Tower of London, or the British Museum, or the National Gallery, or St. Paul's Cathedral, or Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. Not long ago, when I dictated the name of the Archbishop of York, who was then Bishop of Stepney, it appeared as "Bishop of Stephany." A chorister of the Cathedral came to me one day in great excitement, telling me that his father was going to London ; I asked if his father intended to take

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him too, and he replied, “ No, my father says he was forty before he ever saw London, and I must wait.”

Lancashire is proud of its separate historical existence as the County Palatine. It delights in hearing or repeating the late Mr. Bright’s complimentary dictum that “ What Lancashire thinks to-day, England thinks to-morrow.” It believes in the superior virility and originality of the North to the South. It claims, not without some plausible argument, that the decisive movements in the political and social history of the nineteenth century, and of the twentieth century so far as it has run its course, the Reform Movement, the Free Trade Movement, the Co-operative Movement, the Labour Movement, and even the Suffrage Movement, originated in the North. In many minds there is a tacit assumption that the North leads, and ought to lead, the way of English progress.

It is possible that the Northern self-confidence or self-satisfaction is not an unqualified benefit. If it affords, as it often has afforded, an impetus to the conception and prosecution of great schemes, it has stood as an obstacle in the way of the docility or imitativeness which would have tended to the improvement of, or the introduction of other schemes, if the North had been willing to receive lessons as well as to impart them. In Manchester, for instance, such enterprises as the construction of the Ship Canal, and the derivation of the water supply from Thirlmere, may be said to occupy a foremost place in the record of English municipal energy. But Manchester is, or was until recently, content to put up, in the lighting of its streets,

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with a system ineffectual at all times as a means of convenience, or a safeguard against crime, and, as often as a foggy season occurred, apparently subject to an almost absolute paralysis, and with a cab service in which the degeneracy of the horses and their vehicles, the absence of taxicabs, or of taxicabs provided with meters, and the topographical ignorance of the drivers and chauffeurs, who seem to feel localities to be discoverable, if at all, by instinct rather than by study, have produced a chaos such as excited surprise and indignation among visitors, but among the inhabitants, so far as could be told, scarcely a murmur of complaint or surprise.

It is with something like a sinking of the heart that any one who apprehends the difference between the North and the South of England, if he happens himself to be a South-countryman, may well enter upon his life in Lancashire. The very language of the people is at times unintelligible to him. Once or twice, when, as I have been travelling homewards by train, the carriage has been invaded by a number of working-men who were returning from a football match, I have listened in sheer bewilderment to their conversation, knowing, of course, that they were talking about the play in the match, but being at a loss to imagine who or what was the particular subject of their rapid and emphatic criticism. A friend of mine, who came from the South, was travelling one day in a tramcar from the Deanery to the Cathedral. He was accosted by a man, apparently a miner, who, being a Lancastrian of Irish descent, and evidently not a teetotaller, insisted upon explaining to him, as a clergyman, the vital

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importance of belonging to the true Church. The passengers in the tramcar were convulsed with laughter ; but between the drink and the brogue of the controversialist, I doubt if my friend understood one sentence in three which were addressed to him. However, his bewilderment made him, I suppose, a good listener ; and the man at his side, when preparing to get out of the tramcar, shook him warmly by the hand, and told him he was a downright good fellow. The familiarity, or let me rather say the friendliness, which is characteristic of life in Manchester, and especially the perpetual hand-shaking, is more Colonial or American than English. It recalls Washington to citizens of the United States. I have heard the ex-governor of an Australian Colony say that it reminded him of Melbourne. A shake of the hand is not only a more frequent, but a more serious, ordeal in the North than it is in the South. Men, and women too, do not shake hands in the languid fashion of Londoners ; they shake hands in a manner so forcible that it is always remembered and sometimes regretted. It will be long ere I forget the evening when I was initiated at the Albion Hotel in Manchester as a member of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes. Some of my friends among the working-class had invited me to become a Buffalo, or, in their own phrase, a " brother Buff," and I gladly accepted their invitation. But when I reached the hotel, or approached it without reaching it, I found that the crowd of expectant Buffaloes had overflowed not only the room in which the ceremony of initiation was to take place, but the hall of the hotel, into the street. It was with

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the utmost difficulty that I forced my way into the hall. The atmosphere of the hall was so stifling that two or three stout Buffaloes were carried out in a swoon, and I thought I should have been carried out myself. But the incident which stamped itself indelibly upon my remembrance was the hand-shaking after the initiation. For so many were the "Brother Buffs" who came round me to shake hands, and so terrible was the pressure of their hand-shaking, that I suffered acute pain for two or three days afterwards ; and from that day to this I have felt a greater pity than before for the President of the United States.

In Manchester, there is comparatively little recognized distinction of class. There is much respect for persons, or for some persons, but not much regard to position. The office which a man holds makes little difference ; it is the man himself who counts. The rudeness or roughness of manner, and sometimes of language, often hides, or affects to hide, deep kindness of heart. I do not think I do injustice to the citizens of Manchester, if I say their kindly feeling for persons in trouble or disgrace shows itself by a forbearance which at times falls little short of weakness. If a public servant is incapacitated by illness from doing his duty, or even if he falls into misfortune through some error of his own, it is remarkable to see how his fellow-citizens are disposed to make allowance for him, and how unwilling they are to get rid of him.

Still, the frankness of speech, which is not, and is not intended to be, discourteous, is at times a little disconcerting. People in Manchester, if I

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may say so, think aloud ; they speak out the thoughts which South-countrymen leave unspoken ; they tell you quite openly what is their opinion of you. A nervous reticence or reserve, an insincere suppression or disguise of feeling, or such complimentary language as borders, or may be thought to border, upon hypocrisy, is, at least among the common working-people, pretty well unknown.

I remember being somewhat taken aback, although I think I ought probably to have felt flattered, some few months after my arrival in Manchester, when a fellow-passenger in a tramcar, to whom I had been talking as we travelled side by side, turning round at the entrance of the car, before he got out, said in a loud voice, perfectly audible to everybody in the car, "Sir, I say you're 'omely." Criticism too, honest and not unkindly, is to the full as common as eulogy ; nor did I wholly dissent from the remark made by an elderly lady, also in a tramcar, "Dean, I tell you what it is—you spout too much."

It is easy to quote amusing instances of the blunt outspokenness which characterizes the manners of men and even women in Lancashire. A good many years ago a high ecclesiastic who prided himself, it is said, upon the dignity of his episcopal office, observed a porter at one of the railway stations saluting him, as he thought, by raising his cap with a deferential air. He walked up to the porter, and told him how glad he was to see such a recognition of his office in the National Church. "It is particularly gratifying," he added, "as coming from a working-man." The only reply of the porter was to say in a gruff

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tone, as he turned away, "Lord bless you, sir, I was only scratchin' my 'ead." Within my own experience a clergyman who succeeded to the incumbency of a parish near Manchester assumed an apologetic tone in talking to one of his parishioners ; he said he knew how much the people must regret the loss of his predecessor, who had lived among them as a clergyman for more than a quarter of a century ; he felt he himself could not hope to be all that a clergyman so long known and so highly respected had been to the parish. Then he paused, as if anticipating that some remonstrance would be offered to his self-depreciatory language. But the only answer which he received was, "No, sir, we all know you're not a patch on him."

In my own clerical profession, it is brought home to me pretty often that the people of Manchester are frank and fearless critics of sermons. If I may be so bold as to criticize the critics of the preaching art, they judge sermons, I think, as they judge persons, freely and forcibly, but they do not always judge them rightly. There have been some persons, clergymen as well as laymen, who have, I think, been over-estimated in Lancashire, and there have been others who have been unduly depreciated. A citizen may live for a long time in pretty close contact with the people, and yet not be able to judge at all infallibly who will or will not take their fancy as a speaker or a preacher. It happened once, not long after I came to Manchester, that I invited a well-known dignitary of the Church to occupy the pulpit of the Cathedral. I was away from home on the Sunday when he preached, and I

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did not hear his sermon. But a day or two after my return, a member of the congregation stopped me in the street. "What did you mean by asking that fellow to preach?" was his abrupt question. I replied with due humility that I thought the congregation would value the opportunity of hearing him. "All that I can say is," was the rejoinder, "that, if that man were in the haberdashery business, he wouldn't get any orders." A bishop who lived for some time as a clergyman in the North of England is fond of telling that, as he came out of his church one day, he was met by an old lady, a parishioner, who, without any introduction, said to him pointedly, "Vicar, I've heard you preach worse." In particular, as it seems to me, people in the North of England do not believe that their fellow-citizens are likely to derive much good from London. It is told that a young man, who thought of adopting the musical profession as a career, went to London for a course of singing lessons. When he came back to Manchester, his father invited a few old friends of his family to hear his singing, and after his vocal exhibition, one of them, turning to him with a solemn air, remarked, "I don't say nowt against you, my lad. You've done your best, doubtless. But if I ever got hold of that chap as gave you your lessons, I'd like to throttle him."

Whether the criticisms of men and things in the North are more correct, as they are certainly more candid, than in the South, I do not know; but I have been struck by the superior vocabulary of the common people in Manchester, and in Lancashire generally. My friends of the working-class, among whom I move from day to day, use

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words of greater rarity and dignity, and use them with an easier familiarity, than persons of the same station in London. I have often been struck by the expressions which fall from the lips of very poor people. The working-people of the North are not perhaps naturally more intelligent, but I think they read books, or at least newspapers, more attentively than the same class in the South.

It is, however, in the keen political interest of the people, and in their consequent habit of attending public meetings, or of listening to and taking part in debates on public affairs, that I am disposed to find the explanation of their enlarged vocabulary. It is possible that I exaggerate a little the command of language among the common people in Lancashire ; but of their political shrewdness and sharpness there can be no doubt. The metropolitan newspapers have themselves allowed that Great Britain looks to Lancashire, and I hope I am not wrong in saying particularly to Manchester, for a leading voice in times of acute political controversy. When I first came into Lancashire, I was invited by both the Conservative and the Liberal Parties to attend their meetings, and, indeed, to propose or second votes of thanks both to Mr. Balfour and to the late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. It has been my rule to avoid strictly political meetings, as I think a minister of religion should be the last person to obey the Whip of any political party ; he should speak as little as possible upon strictly political issues, and should speak, if at all, as far as possible, with the utmost freedom of disinterested conviction. Yet abstention from political meetings in Manchester is a heavy personal loss ; for they are

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full of interest and humour. How keen is the criticism of working-people there upon political speeches it is possible to judge by a single repartee as extemporaneous and effective as any which is known to me in the history of public meetings. It happened that a certain candidate for Parliamentary honours, whom I will call Mr. C., had begun life in humble circumstances with a monosyllabic name; then, upon his marriage with the daughter of a wealthy manufacturer, he assumed a double-barrelled name, and became Mr. C.-D. In one of his electioneering speeches, when he was attacking what was then the Chancellor of the Exchequer's favourite doctrine of the unearned increment, he insisted upon the difficulty of defining and distinguishing the various increments of property. "What is unearned increment?" he cried. "I defy anybody in the hall to tell me what unearned increment is." From the back of the hall came at once the crushing rejoinder, "It's the 'yphen between C and D."

*Recollections and Reflections.* 1915.

## XVIII

### VISCOUNT SNOWDEN

#### Past, Present, and Future

[Viscount Snowden has been in turn a civil servant, a lecturer and journalist, a leader of the Labour party, a Chancellor of the Exchequer, and a member of the House of Lords. He worked very zealously for many years as an apostle of Socialism, and was a prominent member of the Labour administrations of 1924 and 1929. In the crisis of 1931, with Mr. MacDonald and other members of the Government, he broke away from his party and remained in office in the new National Government. He has always been an able exponent of his own point of view and a fearless and uncompromising critic of that of his opponents.]

LOOKING back over sixty years of vivid recollections of the incidents of my own life and contemporary events and changes, what are the thoughts they inspire?

Over forty years of my life have been absorbed in active political work. I was drawn into politics by accident and not by deliberate design. I have never shaped my own political career; events have done that for me.

Although I have had my share of the success of a political life, I should hesitate to advise a young man with ambitions for a political career to embark upon it. The happiest years of my life

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were those I spent outside Parliament and on the public platform. I often wonder if I should not have been more useful if I had confined myself to that missionary work and left others to engage in the practical task of legislation. However, Fate ordained otherwise.

I have seen every side of political life. I have watched the play of ambition and the intrigues of self-seekers. I have known men in all parties of fine character, who were inspired by a high sense of public duty ; but there is probably no sphere in which mixed motives play a larger part than in politics.

Politics and the ambition to be in Parliament have an extraordinary fascination for some people, often for those without any qualification for its important work. Others have a genuine and informed interest in politics and love the excitement of Party warfare. Others again devote themselves with complete absorption to the work of Parliament, and with a single desire to serve the welfare of the country.

From my experience I can pay a sincere tribute to the general purity of British political life. I believe that very few men try to get into Parliament to serve their own personal interests. It is true that all Members of Parliament are subject to pressure from sectional interests in their constituencies, and often vote against their convictions in the mistaken belief that to do otherwise would lose them votes.

I am convinced that both in electioneering and Parliament honesty in thought and word is the best policy. The voters like a man to be honest and plain-spoken, whether they agree with him

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or not, and if a candidate can convince them of his sincerity he is not likely to lose many votes even if the electors disagree with some of his views. I am not denying that electors can be carried away by a plausible and self-seeking demagogue, but such men are found out in time. The House of Commons has an instinct for sizing up such men and never tolerates for long mere bounce.

I have said that I should hesitate to advise a young man to enter politics, but I realize that if he be actuated by a passion for the public service he would find in politics an occupation of absorbing interest. The prizes of a Parliamentary career are few, however, and the great majority of those who devote themselves to politics are likely to be disappointed if their purpose in entering Parliament has been solely one of personal ambition.

Few members can ever hope to be more than "back-bench" members. These have on the whole a dull and monotonous life waiting for opportunities which rarely come. The inactivity is irksome to an active man. But, in spite of all, most men like the House of Commons and generally leave it with regret.

It ought to be said that the opportunities for a young man of exceptional capacity and industry were never greater in politics than they are to-day. The days when social position and wealth were the sole passports to Cabinet office are gone for ever. In the present Cabinet (1934) there are only three members who belong to the old governing class. The last six Prime Ministers have all been drawn from the middle or working classes. The Party leaders are always on the

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look-out for promising young men, and every encouragement is given to them when they are recognized. The last quarter of a century seems to have produced few statesmen of outstanding ability. It is the age of mediocrity, or as Mr. Lloyd George aptly put it in one of his coruscating phrases, "This is the acceptable day of the pygmies."

Nothing I have written will, I hope, give the impression that I am under-estimating the importance of politics and the need for men and women of capacity to devote themselves to the work ; but they must be men and women of strength of character if they are to survive the storms and stresses of their chosen avocation.

It is the glory of British political life that so many men are ready to sacrifice their personal interests in business and profession to give their services to various forms of public work. These men are to be found in all Parties, and if the desire to serve is mixed with the desire for distinction the ambition is not always unworthy.

Passing from these reflections on politics and politicians I turn to a brief survey of the changes I have seen in the material and moral condition of the people. I have lived in a wonderful age, full of marvellous discoveries and amazing advances in scientific knowledge. I have witnessed a vast increase in the potentialities of material and social progress. The changes I have seen, not only in the actual lives of the people but in the attitude of the public towards social evils, are so great and fundamental that I am encouraged to

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believe that still greater changes will be effected, at an ever-increasing rate of progress, *provided the menace and scourge of war can be removed.*

When Socialist propaganda began forty years ago its greatest task was to convince people that there *was* a social problem. Poverty it was generally believed was due to the lack of effort, the thriftlessness or the drunkenness of the individual. That generation had inherited the traditions and beliefs of a century of acute individualism. The doctrine of *laissez-faire* was generally accepted, and State interference was looked upon as a real evil. Competition was regarded as the true motive power of industry and of progress. It eliminated the weak and the incompetent and gave the battle to the strong.

The Church was still under the influence of individualism and of "other-worldliness" as compensation for the sufferings of this life. Poverty was defended on the ground that it was divinely instituted and intended to serve some great religious purpose. Children in the Sunday Schools were taught to sing :

" The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them high and lowly,  
And ordered their estate."

In industry and religion, in the recognition of the causes and nature of poverty, and in the appreciation of individual and social responsibility for these conditions, the change in the last half century has been very great. Politics have been transformed, and so have ideas about competition

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in industry. All political parties are agreed that fundamental changes in our industrial and social system are needed, though they differ in their conception of the form the new Order should take.

But all agree that planning must take the place of anarchic competition, and that the State must take a large share in supervising or controlling the re-organization. It is truer to-day than when Sir William Harcourt made the remark that "We are all Socialists now."

The social condition of the people is the dominating question of the age. In every Parliamentary country the social question is forcing itself on the attention of the Legislature. Political parties compete in offering solutions for our social and industrial problems. Innumerable societies and organizations exist to force their particular panaceas on public attention. The Churches are now alive to the urgency of action to remove the slums, to give children a better start in life, and to redress the inequalities of opportunity, and remove unnecessary and unmerited poverty.

The time for hesitating steps in industrial and social reform is past, and only a bold and courageous policy can save the country from the disaster which has destroyed democratic government in other lands. It is idle to shut our eyes to the fact that a great body of people are losing their faith in Parliament as it is now constituted. Parliament, they say, is not delivering the goods. A drastic reform of Parliamentary procedure is urgently needed. Its machinery has not been brought up-to-date. It might have served its purpose when there was no democratic electorate, and when Parliament was not expected to deal

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with the vast number of industrial and economic questions for which a fully-enfranchised electorate is demanding a solution.

A body of over six hundred Members of Parliament is no more competent to frame the details of legislative measures than an electorate of twenty-eight millions of voters would be. The true function of democracy is for the people to elect for legislative and administrative work those they consider most competent to carry into effect the reforms which they have approved in broad outline. It is the same with the House of Commons itself. If that body is to be effective, and if a large volume of legislation is to be enacted, a more expeditious way of doing the business will have to be devised. The waste of time in interminable talk will have to cease. Weeks or months of discussion on the details of a Bill is a futile waste of time. Seldom does a measure pass in its final form, after all this talk, with any material change from the Bill as it was introduced. Parliamentary discussion should be confined to the general principles of a Bill and the details should be left to a body of experts for close examination. Such a procedure might be criticized on the ground that it would be a derogation of democratic control, but that is not really so. In any case, it is the only way in which Parliament can be transformed from a mere "talking shop" to a business body. It is the only way in which real progress can be made in the legislative output of a Session.

Parliament would retain the right to reject a measure it did not approve, and the democratic control of the electorate over the Government and Parliament would be maintained. Whatever

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may be the measures adopted for reforming Parliamentary methods, something will have to be done to make it a more efficient machine for legislative purposes. Otherwise, I feel sure that Parliament will continue to lose popular confidence, and that encouragement will be given to revolutionary and anti-democratic methods.

I believe there is in this country a vast volume of opinion, confined to no one party or class, which is prepared to support a great and courageous advance in social and economic reform. That opinion is not revolutionary, nor does it ask for wild and reckless experiments. But millions of people would give enthusiastic support to far more drastic measures than have yet been adopted for the demolition of slums, for dealing with unemployment, the land question, with education, and with the national planning of production and distribution.

I have no doubt in my own mind as to the general form which industrial and social reorganization will take. I am convinced we shall pass more and more into the Socialist State. After forty years of the advocacy of Socialist principles I am more than ever convinced of their rightness and that Society will inevitably, if gradually, evolve into that stage. Looking over my old books and pamphlets I find little that I would modify or change. I have never regarded Socialism as a cut-and-dried scheme of social organization to be applied indiscriminately to the country's industrial and economic life. Socialism to me has been a principle, the principle of co-operation as opposed to competition. The form which Socialism will take must be determined,

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and is being determined, by considerations of expediency. The old idea that Socialism meant that the Government will undertake the management of all industry and the regimentation of all the people has been abandoned, if it were ever held. Socialism will take various forms according to the nature of the undertakings to which its co-operative principle will be applied. The one object which will be aimed at will be to secure the most efficient form of management and organization and to provide the greatest measure of social well-being.

The material aims of Socialism have never appeared to me to be an end in themselves, but only a necessary and inevitable means towards the liberation of human beings from grinding toil, from poverty and insecurity, that they might have leisure and opportunity for the higher end of the development of their intellectual and spiritual life.

The waste of human material and the suppression of individual liberty are the chief indictments of the competitive system. I believe that given moral conditions of life men and women will have a chance to develop a corresponding morality in every sphere of human activity. As Herbert Spencer puts it: "The individual development in a given period is determined by the corresponding development of the social organism."

A Socialism which standardized everybody and everything would have no attractions for me. If the great potentialities for producing the necessities of life were fully used and organized, the wage-earning part of life would be but a small part of the whole. Leisure for the employment of individual tastes would be abundant. The

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Socialism I have worked for and still look for, and which I see gradually advancing, will not destroy individual enterprise and initiative but will actually encourage these things in a larger number of people by restricting the power of the exploiter. Competition would be raised to a sphere where the success of one would not mean the impoverishment of the many—to the realm of the intellect and the spirit from which no soul need be shut out.

I fully realize that such a Socialism as I have in mind will be reached only stage by stage, so gradually perhaps that men will not realize that great changes are taking place in their midst. I deny the possibility, either of a static form of Socialism or of a ready-made Utopia, or of its desirability if it were possible :

“ Ah, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what’s a Heaven for ? ”

I have devoted a lifetime to the advocacy of this principle and to the building up of a party to give practical political application to it. I do not regret this. The Labour Party has profoundly influenced political thought and given a new interest in politics and sound reforms to millions of electors who were formerly indifferent. The incidents of the last few years have alienated me from the Labour Party, but they have not robbed me of my memories of the past nor of the satisfaction of having helped to create this great instrument which, intelligently used, may yet be potent in advancing social progress.

But it has to be admitted that the Labour Party of to-day is not the Party it formerly was.

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It has lost much of its idealistic quality and spiritual fervour. It has become an ordinary political party, with little to distinguish it from the quality of other parties. This change, I know, is deplored by the survivors of the early Socialist days. In a letter written to me three weeks before his death, Dick Wallhead expressed his grief at the loss of the old idealism and ethical passion. The recent occurrence of my seventieth birthday brought me a flood of letters from old comrades-in-arms, all reminiscent of the past joyful comradeship and of the "sweetness and light" of the old days which political success seems to have destroyed. Ambitious men have been lifted into positions of leadership in the Party who know nothing of the early struggles and sacrifices which have made it.

Notwithstanding all this, I believe that the Labour Party is established as one of the great Parties of the State. I am not sanguine that it will gain much strength in the immediate future. Unwise leadership and bad political judgment are arresting its progress. It will be a long while, unless wiser counsels prevail, before it will gain the majority on which it has set its heart.

Meanwhile, this and the sad lack of unity amongst the progressive forces of the country, seem likely to give the country a long term of conservative government; but as to the more distant future, I have no doubt that a Government will come into power with a mandate to consciously organize society on Socialist lines.

I am writing these final lines on August 4, 1934—the twentieth anniversary of the beginning

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of the greatest act of criminal folly the world has ever known. All the signs of the times point to the fact that the tragic experiences of that war have taught the statesmen of Europe no lesson except to prepare on a more colossal scale and with feverish anxiety for a repetition of that terrible calamity. Every nation is giving the lie to its professions of a desire for peace by increasing its armaments and by devising more diabolical methods of slaughter. The various Pacts renouncing war as an instrument of national policy, Pacts of Non-aggression and Covenants of the League of Nations give no real feeling of security against war. A Disarmament Convention has been sitting for nearly three years, and the discussions have done nothing but expose the reliance of the nations upon armaments, and exhibit their mutual jealousies. The nations are spending in an impoverished world £800,000,000 a year on preparation for war.

The old diplomacy which brought about the last war is pursuing the same policy of encirclement and secret understandings. No effort is being made to remove the manifest injustices which are threatening the peace of Europe.

If the professions of their desire for peace of the late Allies were sincere they would set about this revision at once, and would remove every legitimate grievance from which Germany and her former Allies are suffering. If that is not done and if Germany is driven to try to obtain justice by force of arms the guilt will not be wholly hers, nor even chiefly hers, but will be that of the Powers who have denied her justice and have shown their determination to keep her sixty

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millions of people in subjection by force. If war comes, is Great Britain to fight to maintain the iniquitous conditions of the Versailles Treaty? That is the question which the British people will have to answer. Are they prepared to sacrifice another million lives and thousands of millions of treasure to back the policy of keeping Germany permanently in a position of humiliating inferiority?

Politicians talk callously about the inevitability of another war. It is wicked talk. War is inevitable only if we make it so. If nations pursue policies which must lead to war, then war they will get. Instead of regarding war as inevitable, nations should be seeking to remove all possible causes of war. Instead of doing that they are increasing their armaments and justifying their action with the fallacy that the bigger their armaments the greater the security of peace. If a British Government would have the courage to declare that they will fulfil no commitments to go to war until the grievances which have been created by the "Peace" Treaties have been removed and territorial wrongs inflicted by these Treaties have been put right, then their action would either remove the present menace of war or put the responsibility for war upon those Powers which were determined to perpetuate these wrongs.

The cost of maintaining enormous armaments is a colossal burden on the nations of the world. It diverts resources which might otherwise be used for social reform. A few weeks ago the British Government refused the demand for raising the school age to fifteen on the ground that the country could not afford the estimated cost

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of £8,000,000. A week later this Government announced an increase in the Air Force which will cost £20,000,000—a clear instance that military expenditure is to be met by the starvation of the social services.

It is impossible for the human intellect to conceive what might have been done if the wealth wasted in the last war had been devoted to improving the condition of the people. That war cost Great Britain £10,000 millions and has left the country with an annual expenditure of hundreds of millions arising from it. It has trebled the national expenditure of 1913. But these figures do not by any means give the whole cost of the war. It nearly destroyed the economic life of the world, and the trade depression from which the nations have suffered ever since is part of the price they have paid, and are paying, for this insensate folly.

With this experience it is criminal madness to talk about and to prepare for the next war. That war would complete the ruin of the world as we know it. It would bring universal bankruptcy and revolutionary chaos in every country. Democratic liberty which the last war has destroyed in many lands would disappear everywhere.

This would be a tragic note on which to end this volume were there not the hope that, despite all, men will contrive to avoid this last great folly. There need be no “next war” if statesmen will combine to shape their policies in harmony with the sincere prayers of the common people of all lands who want to see the banishment of the war spirit from all human thought and action.

*An Autobiography.* 1934.

## XIX

### A. J. CRONIN

#### Doctor into Writer

[Mr. A. J. Cronin was educated at Glasgow University, and served in the navy during the Great War. He then became a doctor in the West End of London. The story of his rapid rise to the front rank among novelists, through the success of *Hatter's Castle*, is much too well told by himself in this selection for anything to be added to it here.]

THE record of my beginning ought really to be entitled, "How Not to Become an Author." I do not submit it as an exemplar, but rather as a Warning. (Yet I *am* apparently an author, and, to my amazement, an author who makes a living from his trade.)

Most novelists who suddenly blaze into print after they have reached the thirties have practised their vice secretly for years. If you tax them with it they may pass the thing off with a laugh, but in their hearts they cannot remember a time when they did not long to write. (Arnold Bennett, for example, is reputed to have composed a sonnet at his mother's knee; while Ethel Mannin produced some scintillating essays before the age of puberty.) But I . . . I concealed no demiurge beneath my childish jersey. And in my adult

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life, for fifteen weary years, I wrote nothing but prescriptions.

Often, I admit, there were moments during my work as a doctor when the peculiarity of some patient would move me to that inhuman delight in the oddness of life which is one of the basic elements of the novelist's attitude. I did feel that here was something of life, something vivid and vital which deserved to be set down. But at the end of the consultation, when the pen went to paper, it was only to record: Rx. The mixture as before.

Many people, by-the-bye, contemplating the number of doctors who have become novelists — Conan Doyle, Georges Duhamel, Somerset Maugham, Helen Ashton, de Vere Stacpoole, and Warwick Deeping, are names which come immediately to mind—must have wondered whether there is not some important point of liaison between these two professions. But if in my own case some connection must be found, it was merely that the rigours of general practice led me to long (naïvely, as I now know to my cost) for the "quiet haven" of authorship. And so once or twice during my medical years, after a particularly trying day, the notion of a novel would enter my head, and I would remark speculatively to my wife: "You know, I believe I could write a bit if I had time."

And she, looking at me over her knitting, would reply kindly: "Do you, dear?" Then, very tactfully, lead me to talk about my golf handicap.

But for Nemesis—or, in humbler language, a piece of seemingly bad luck—I should probably

still be dealing out bromides to neurotic spinsters. There is said to be a destiny which affects our ends. In my case it affected my inside. After I had been practising several years in the West End of London, I developed what, in the army, used to be summarily denoted as a "gastric stomach." I was, so to speak, hoist with my own petard: for ten years I had been handing out all sorts of delightful complaints, but now some of my friends in Harley Street put their heads together and handed out this one to me. I protested. I think I said that their action amounted to a breach of medical etiquette, but it was no use. The sentence, in the traditional Harley Street manner, was immutable: low diet and six months' rest without the option.

And then, as I got up from the couch in that wretched consulting room and began to hitch my braces, a dazzling thought transfixed me.

"By heaven!" I thought, "gastric stomach or no gastric stomach, now I have the opportunity to write a novel." And on my way home, remembering that spelling had never been my strong point, I stopped at Mudie's and bought an English dictionary.

And so, symbolically at least, with the dictionary in one hand and a tin of Benger's in the other, I set out for the Western Highlands to create a masterpiece. Strictly speaking, then, my first book, *Hatter's Castle*, was the product of a disordered digestion and not, as one lady who wrote to me inferred, of a disordered mind.

I ought here to say that my family had accompanied me to the farm outside Inveraray—a place chosen with much care as being suitable for the

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birthplace of a Great Work—and now they awaited developments with interest.

You see, having emphatically declared before my entire household that I *would* write a novel (tacitly inferring, of course, that it was the fault of every member of this household that I had not already written twenty novels), I found myself faced with the unpleasant necessity of justifying my rash remarks. All I could do was to retire, with a show of courage and deep purpose, to the little room upstairs which had been at once selected as “the room for Daddy to write in.” Here I was confronted by a square deal table, which my wife insisted was “just the thing,” by a neat pile of virgin twopenny exercise books, and—precisely laid out beside the books—by the English dictionary I had purchased so sanguinely. Nor must I forget the Benger’s, treasured in some suitable domestic background, for I am proud of that bland stimulus. Too often in the bad old days brandy has been the chief inspiration of long-winded novelists.

It was the morning following our arrival. Amazingly—for that latitude—the sun shone. Our little rowing boat danced entrancingly at anchor on the loch, waiting to be rowed. My car stood in the garage, waiting to be driven. The trout in the burn lay head to tail, waiting to be caught. The hills stood fresh and green, waiting to be climbed. And I—I stood at the window of the little upstairs room. I looked at the sun, the loch, the boat, the car, the burn, and the mountains; then sadly turned and sat down before my deal table, my exercise books, and my dictionary. “What a fool you are,” I said to myself gloomily,

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and I used an adjective to magnify my imbecility. How often during the next three months was I to repeat that assertion—each time with stronger adjectives.

But in the meantime I was going to begin. Firmly I opened the first exercise book, firmly I jogged my fountain pen out of its habitual inertia. Firmly I poised that pen and lifted my head for inspiration.

It was a pleasant view through that narrow window: a long green field ran down to a bay of the loch. There was movement. Six cows, couched in the shadow of a hawthorn hedge, ruminated; an old goat with an arresting beard tinkled his bell in search, I thought, of dandelions; a yellow butterfly hovered indecisively above a scarlet spurt of fuchsia; some white hens pottered about, liable to sudden flusters and retreats, some more majestic fowls strutted in sudden excitements and pursuits.

It had all a seductive, dreamlike interest. I thought I might contemplate the scene for a minute or two before settling down to work. I contemplated. Then somebody knocked at the door and said, "Lunch time." I started, and searched hopefully for my glorious beginning, only to find that the exercise book still retained its blank virginity.

I rose and went downstairs, and as I descended those white scrubbed wooden steps, I asked myself angrily if I were not a humbug. Was I like the wretched poet d'Argenton in Daudet's *Jack*, with his *Parva Domus*, *Magna Quies*, and his *Daughter of Faust*, which, as the days slipped on, never progressed beyond that still-born opening sen-

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tence: "In a remote valley of the Pyrenees teeming with legends"? Was I like that? I carved the mutton glumly. My two young sons, removed by their nurse to a remote distance in order that they might on no account disturb the novelist, had returned in spirits. The younger, aged four, now lisped breezily: "Finished your book yet, Daddy?" The elder, always of a corrective tendency, affirmed with the superior wisdom of his two additional years: "Don't be silly. Daddy's only half finished." Whereupon their mother smiled upon them reprovingly: "No, dears, Daddy can only have written a chapter or two."

I felt not like a humbug, but like a criminal. For my worry was not merely the ridiculous one of justifying myself before the household, but a far greater anxiety about our future. Naturally this enforced rest would eat into my savings, and the prospect of ultimately returning to a profession I disliked would not hasten my recovery. It seemed to me that the success of this projected novel was my only hope. And yet I had wasted a whole morning dreaming at a window!

I remembered the aphorism of an old school-master of mine. "Get it down," he used to declare. "If it stays in your head, it'll never be anything. Get it down." So after lunch I went straight upstairs and began to get my ideas down.

I took immense pains with that first chapter, and laboured over such redundant details as a minute description of the "Castle," reading up Architecture in the Encyclopædia in my burning desire for accuracy. I can smile now at the many

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hours I spent creating this and other waste tissue. But then, some of the technical difficulties of writing proved very great. For instance, I was always dissatisfied with the construction of sentences, and went to endless trouble to alter them into forms far less effective than the original. Again, I wrote the first two parts without in the least knowing what was going to happen in the third book, but here the character of the Hatter came to my aid and carried the novel to its inevitable ending.

Indeed, I could fill a volume with the emotional experiences of those next three months. There were, inevitably, moments when the thing possessed me, and I thought—surely, yes, surely this is worth while. You remember how Thackeray, writing feverishly far into the small hours of the morning, finished that scene in *Vanity Fair* where Becky is discovered by her husband, Rawdon, with my Lord Steyne, and how, carried away by his own feelings, Thackeray threw down his pen and cried to the empty room: “Sublime, sir! By heavens, it’s sublime!”

Blundering along in this first incoherent attempt at self-expression, it came even to me—a faint gleam of this achievement, the feeling that something was rising out of the dead words.

But there were other moments—not moments, but hours, and even days—when nothing in the universe was right, when I classed myself morosely as an inept, presumptuous fool—madder than the Hatter I was attempting to create. I shall never cease to wonder how I managed to finish this first novel. I had no reason whatever to believe that I could succeed in the task I had set myself.

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But my lack of confidence was balanced by the ceaseless drive of my anxiety. I argued with myself that failure meant a return to doctoring, that I must carry through this one attempt to escape. If it was unsuccessful I could at least return to my work and resign myself to my fate knowing that I had made the only possible effort for freedom. However, in spite of my reasonable arguments, these alternating moods were difficult to subdue.

I remember vividly the day—it was in point of fact my birthday—when the typescript of Book I. arrived from London. My typist, an elderly, infirm lady who had been a patient of mine, had done her work nobly. Yet, when I read those first chapters, my heart sank within me. “Have I,” I asked myself, “written this awful, this incredibly awful nonsense?” The words leapt at me from the pages with devastating banality. I felt not like an author but like an idiot, and I had the impulse there and then to tear up all that I had written, to abandon the whole thing. Without knowing it, I had reached that stage which, I am now informed, every author reaches with every book. It is the stage when the author stands, so to speak, with his manuscript in his hand and cries out to the moon: “Am I going on with this, or am I not?” This rather touching picture of an author at the cross-roads is faintly reminiscent of Alice’s interview with the Cheshire Cat. But the position, though ludicrous, is not altogether pleasant, and the impulse towards destruction—I mean, naturally, of the manuscript—is a powerful one.

In my own case, for better or worse, I with-

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stood temptation—the balance fell against the tearing. I went on writing. I wrote harder than ever. I wrote, indeed, as many as five thousand words each day. I finished the book with a last desperate spurt. Good, bad, or indifferent I did not then care. The only thing that mattered was that I was rid of it. The relief, the sense of emancipation, was inexpressible. It was finished ; I had done it ; in three months I had written a novel ; and so a sense of achievement intermingling subtly with this glorious feeling of freedom, I began to row, to fish, to climb those mountains to my heart's content.

But now, gradually, through this afterglow of triumph, realization slowly came that the labour of writing the book was not quite everything. There was, for example, the minor matter of publication. I hadn't thought of that before. I felt myself at a very real disadvantage, as I had no friends in the Press, no influence in the world of letters. I knew none of those pashas whose advertisements blazon the pages of literary supplements, and so I was obliged to choose a publisher at random. My conception of a publisher was like the young James Barrie's idea of an editor—a godlike creature approachable only by lesser deities. I was very much afraid that this omniscient being might not condescend to acknowledge my tentative communications. And so, with this doubt in my mind, I wrote to *four* publishers, asking if they were prepared to read my manuscript. I hoped that, with luck, one out of the four might deign, in a moment of absent-minded graciousness, to reply.

They all replied. I tell you this to explode the

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fallacy that unknown authors cannot get their manuscripts read. And not only will manuscripts be read. If work has merit at all, it will be accepted. Publishers are not too ruthless, but too kind. They accept far too many first novels, in the same spirit, I suppose, in which racegoers back "dark horses."

In my own case the first publisher stated that he would read my novel ; the second that he would be pleased to read my novel ; the third firm informed me that they would be very pleased to read my novel ; but the fourth, ah, the fourth gentleman—he said that he would be *delighted* to read my novel. He then, in his courtesy, became my victim. I dispatched the manuscript to him by return of post. Then I deliberately put the whole venture out of my head.

I am not ignorant of the polite fiction of the anxious author rising each morning, with straining eyes and palpitating bosom, to meet the postman ; but, although I will concede that author at the cross-roads, I cannot help to perpetuate the picture of the author quivering at the postman's knock. At any rate, I was not like that. I was aware now, only too sadly, too fully aware of the faults in my work. I knew that it was too long, too ponderous, too thoroughly over-written. I knew that it had no merit but a possible sincerity, that it had not the remotest chance of recognition. And so I made the subject taboo amongst my family. I announced that when this thing—we had fallen into the habit of calling it *the thing*—when this thing returned there was to be no word spoken of condolence or regret.

I was stunned when, a month later, I received

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word that *the thing* had been accepted. Though I shall never forget the wild exhilaration of that moment, hours passed before I completely realized my phenomenal luck. Then for some time the whole household was topsy-turvy with excitement. When I calmed down, I decided that I must be very level-headed, and wondered staidly whether the book would sell enough copies to justify postponing my return to medical work in order to write a second novel (now that the first step was taken, I did not dare to contemplate the possibility of giving up my practice altogether).

The events which followed made me feel that at any moment I might wake to cold reality from this delightful dream. The novel was chosen by the Book Society, and has since sold one hundred thousand copies in this country and America. It was translated into six languages. It was serialized and dramatized. And, crowning touch of magnificent unreality, a shop in Bond Street now sports the name of *Hatter's Castle*.

I never pass that establishment without experiencing an inward twinge, but whether it be ecstasy or remorse I cannot tell.

*Beginnings (Various Authors).* 1935.

## XX

### ERNEST RHYS

#### A Night with Joseph Conrad

[Mr. Ernest Rhys is a Londoner by birth, the author of a number of works in prose and verse, and the editor of many more. His life has been devoted to literature, and he will always be remembered as the distinguished editor of the celebrated *Everyman* series of literary masterpieces.]

IT was in the days when Henley's magazine, the old *Scots Observer*, was moving south to London, and a vigorous team of original contributors was being got together for its successor the *National Observer*, that in an early number I happened on some chapters of an extraordinary sea story, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus."* The power and spirit of this new kind of saga took my fancy immensely, and I went about asking people who Joseph Conrad was? One of the people must, I think, have been Edward Garnett, who told me how the two men, Joseph Conrad and John Galsworthy, had met on board a ship when Conrad was mate of the vessel. There they struck up an acquaintance, and by that strange chance had got the impulse to turn definitely to tale-telling. Not long after, when Conrad had come back to the port of

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London, and was staying there, sick and discouraged, and at odds with himself, before he resumed his seafaring, he began to write *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* having dropped an earlier story which was not making much headway.

Given to romanticize men and things, one vividly figured this Polish exile who had turned into an English seaman and might be seen walking the streets of Wapping and the riverside purlieus. However, time went on, and I was not lucky enough to see him till many years afterward, when his first desperate struggle to win a reading public in England was over, and the critics and reviewers who had been puzzled to begin with were talking of a Conrad book with an "I told you so" air. How interesting are these first passages in the history of men who learn to be masters of their art. As for the London scene, you will remember how often in Conrad's stories there is a London opening to the seafaring adventures. In the story of *Youth*, Conrad postulates London as the inevitable form of induction to such a sea-saga. The first scene, he says, could have occurred nowhere but there, that is to say in England and in London, "where men and sea interpenetrate, so to speak—the sea entering into the life of most men, and the men knowing something or everything about the sea, in the way of amusement, of travel, or of bread-winning."

Many years after he had finished and published that superb short story of *Youth*, an American editor asked me for an article on Conrad; and it seemed that the best way to give life to one's account of him would be to go and see him in his own surroundings. There was no chance of finding

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him on shipboard any longer, for he had left the sea and was now living in a country house in Kent. Accordingly, I left London one November evening at dusk, armed with an invitation to spend a night with him, taking train to Canterbury, near which he had fixed his abode. On the journey the Thames estuary and the opening of the Medway faded into the dark, and the lights of the Chatham dockyards glittered blue-white in the frosty air ; and when at length we ran into a badly lit country station, and alighting I stood waiting outside it, I stared into the dark as if expecting to spy a ship's dinghy. Instead, the headlights of a car swerved on the black road ; and in three minutes we had left the narrow streets behind and were gliding along under the frosty stars, with the keen smell of the Kentish fields distilling around us.

It was pure country, unbevilla'd and sea-remote, no doubt of that. We passed a village, irregular low roofs, hardly any lights ; and then the car swayed and sank into a trough of the earth —and we sighted the landfall of a country house. Beyond it, a bright-lit doorway appeared, and at the door stood the master of the house to offer a Kentish welcome.

Within, the house had no sea-reminders to offer, unless the almost tropical grove of flowers in the hall and passages could supply them. A jolly wood fire, fed from the logs of a sycamore blown down in the last gale, burned in the study grate.

Since we had last met, my host was a little older, a little greyer, and his old enemy, podagra, had got under his guard. But he was in spirit undiminished ; though he might growl now and again at an enemy that had attacked him first

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while he was at sea years ago, and had kept worrying him ever since.

On the table by the fire lay a novel he had been reading when I arrived. "Edith Wharton," he said, with the zest of a connoisseur, as if one should say, "a blue picotee."

When we talked, then and afterward, of his contemporaries, I found him keenly interested in what they were doing, and fully alive to a sense of their fellow craftsmanship and their new modes. It was not any mere literary test he applied, but one that in the novel, in the tale, must always come first: the human factor.

He spoke of the younger writers and their amazing cleverness.

"But," said he, "some of them do not seem to think you need to be kept *engaged* all the while. There are dull pages; the story drags. You have to whip up your interest. That does not do. Every page must be alive." He resumed with a droll look of dismay: "Some people say 'I find Conrad dull.' Eh? I do not know. I try to make every page tell—every sentence. When that fails . . ." He made a gesture of abdication that was not at all final.

At that time there had been a pause in his writing. He was mustering his forces for his next campaign, but there had been a longer interval than usual since his last novel. It was natural for him to make things visible into the gauge of things invisible, and state his own destiny in a ship's voyage; and one might steal the ominous black shape of Koh-ring from *The Shadow Line* to close a gap in his own career. This is another way of stating what he has said elsewhere about fate,

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and a man's affairs : " Let him make what efforts he will : he can only refigure his own destiny." One dare not say that the fatalism of a man like Renouard (in *The Planter of Malata*) was a part of his creator's make-up. But this is certain, his revelation of the mind of man has come of the power to identify the narrated event, the character, the scenes, with those secret impulses that are refigured in the mind before they are lived and realized, and put into a shape fit for the fabulist's purposes.

One would have liked to ask him, in so many words, whether he was not really a symbolist, and whether characters like Marlow and scenes like Koh-ring and Malata had not a double identity, that of fact and that of the fantasy behind fact. I hesitated :

" Do you make a scenario of a story before you set about writing it ? Or do you simply pitch on a character like Lingard or Almayer, or your other-self in *The Arrow of Gold*, to serve as *agent provocateur* ? "

Conrad had an agreeable way of treating his inquisitor. He looked, with a cryptic look, at his Kentish wood fire—across the smoke of the cigarettes.

" No, I have my psychological aim, first of all. That is quite distinct in my mind. Then I look about for some event, some personal adventure, or if you like some catastrophe, *pour motiver* my chief characters. But I never lose sight of my real aim."

Later on, we resumed our talk in another room. I was troubled by an uneasy feeling that I was a treacherous guest, conspirator to steal the elixir

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of this magician, like Hussuf in the *Arabian Nights*. How far was it English in essence ?

Remember, Conrad was only twenty-one when he first reached English shores and landed at Lowestoft ; then he spent five months in a coaster, the *Skimmer of the Sea*, between that port and the Tyne. He could not speak a word of English when he landed ; though the Red Ensign had already cast its spell over him. He learned seamanship and English on the *Skimmer*. It was his mariner's university.

But there was no hesitation on his part. He did not even adopt English. "It was I who was adopted by the genius of the tongue." The capture was swift and inevitable. The very idioms of English, he declared, affected his temperament and fashioned his "still plastic character." Now, having followed him through some forty sea voyages from the first Lingard book to the last, and from the Nigger to Bellarab, we see how natural the adoption was. We can make out both his seaman's and penman's pedigree which begins with the English novels he read in Polish versions—among them *Nicholas Nickleby*. "It was extraordinary," he says, "how well Mrs. Nickleby could chatter disconnectedly in Polish." A novel of Anthony Trollope was actually the ritual-book used on the eve of Conrad's Anglican baptism. . . . Another forbear, not so surprising because of the seaman strain, was Captain Marryat, who "created a priceless legend," and yet another was Fenimore Cooper, who "wrote before the Great American language was invented." In his cordial appreciation of the two, Conrad declared *sans réserve* that they "shaped" his life.

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These old standards help us to take what we might call "the departure" in his career. He learned their narrative device, but he broke with their literary mode. What is it in him—this consummate sailor, this reshaper of the Ship Adventurous—what is it that has so taken hold of a public that is forgetting Marryat's *Midshipman Easy* and Fenimore Cooper's *Pilot*?

Presently we fell to discussing the art of the satirist; then that of the caricaturist. Hogarth he spoke of with vehement appreciation; but the caricaturists—no! He disliked their attitude, their mode of ridicule, their art of derision. The caricaturists are of a day; the day goes, and they perish. But the great satirists—Cervantes, Rabelais, Hogarth—live by their dilatation of human nature. They look to its substance, its essential virtue and vice, not to its accidents. One harps on such things because of a perverse desire to get into a master craftsman's workshop, find his measure and surprise him at his craft. But it is not so easy.

"One knows," he said, speaking of the *via media* of the imagination, "one knows well enough all mankind has streamed that way. It is the charm of universal experience from which one expects an uncommon or personal sensation—a bit of one's own."

Which of the English novelists, I asked, counted to him most for stimulus, in his sense of narrative, when he was beginning to write? He did not hesitate.

"Dickens and Thackeray. And of the two, Dickens easily first!"

"What of the later men? George Meredith?"

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"No! Meredith's books are too glittering, too *éblouissant*, as the French say."

Of his foreign masters, his last volume of collected essays pays tribute to Anatole France, Guy de Maupassant, Turgenev, and others. We must go to other masters for his captains in sea-romance, following whom he made the sea into the revealer of men, of you and me, his fellow voyagers, and every ship a living thing, a personal instrument, an agent of destiny.

For Conrad wrote the sea-fable of man against fate, death, evil chance: and the romance of the known meeting and challenging the unknown. It is the chart of the eternal voyager, man, facing destiny and the elements, that seizes the imagination in Conrad's pages.

Conrad performed the grand feat of taking psychology to sea; and revealed a new region, land and water, and furnished it with men, women, ghosts, moods, memories, ships, docks, watersides, giving it life and a language of its own.

Next morning awoke me to the sound of the woodcutters sawing up the old sycamore tree, blown down at the foot of the garden. It produced a curious illusion of something wilder in this Kentish landscape than might appear at a first glance; and one thought again of the Polish scene sketched in that memorable bit of autobiography *A Personal Record*, and pictured the waste of white earth and the clumps of trees about a village of the Ukrainian plain; and the country house there where the returned traveller and seafarer carried the manuscript of *Almayer's Folly*. The old homestead in the Ukraine and his country house in Kent, a misty river mouth in Borneo

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and a foggy London sun in Bessborough Gardens —they were all brought into one orbit of earth by the romancer's Merlin touch.

Conrad had one decided *bête noire*: no other than Bernard Shaw. Possibly the antipathy dated from the time of the War when Shaw was amusing himself at the expense of the English soldiers and their friends at home, which affronted Conrad in his regard for his adopted country and his Polish sense of the dignity to be observed in matters of life and death. Still, one is left puzzled by it, and reduced to quoting a friend of both men who once said in explanation: "Ah well, you see, Conrad had the strain of the Polish aristocrat in his blood, while Shaw is—well, Shaw is Shaw."

Some little while after that Canterbury pilgrimage, when I wanted if possible to get out of Conrad the right to reprint one of his short stories in a collection of such things, I remembered how eagerly he had spoken of Hogarth and decided to use that as a base means of securing his consent. Hanging over my mantelpiece was a Hogarth print, one of the "Idle Prentice" series, in which the godless youth is putting off in a boat attended by a jail chaplain and rowed by a boatman as ugly as sin. A great little cartoon—it seemed the very thing to gain Conrad's good will. So I sent it off to him with a letter asking him if, when it had put him in a congenial mood, he would think of letting me include one of his stories in the contemplated book. He replied very cordially, but not a word about the story. It served me right for having given a gift with an ulterior motive.

I did not see him again until the day of the

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meeting in Bedford Street to arrange the memorial to W. H. Hudson, which afterward created so much heart-burning over the Epstein figure of Rima. Conrad was slipping away before the end, after a delightful speech by the late Lady Grey, when, knowing how rarely he was in London then, I followed and caught him at the door. There I reminded him how he had evaded my question about the short story and he shook his head. "But," said he, "I hung up that Hogarth on my wall, and do you know what? It keeps me straight."

He was hurrying off to catch a train, and as he disappeared round the corner I reflected on those four words, "It keeps me straight," and saw what he meant by them. When he was writing a story, a glance at that wonderfully strong draughtsmanship of Hogarth helped to keep him right in his own composition. Indeed, the words often recurred to me afterward, for they were the last four words I heard him utter. He died—was it a year later?—while he was in the midst of writing his story of Napoleon about which he had told me earlier, with the city of Genoa in the background.

Conrad was an old friend of W. H. Hudson and a devoted admirer; and I believe *Green Mansions* and the book of autobiography *Far Away and Long Ago* would, had he been an Indian warrior, have been among the precious belongings he would like to have carried with him into the other world.

*Everyman Remembers.* 1931.

## XXI

### ANDREW CARNEGIE

#### The Application of Science to Industry

[Andrew Carnegie belonged to a family of Scots linen weavers who emigrated to the United States in 1848. He started work at the age of thirteen, and carried on his education by means of a lending library. He soon became associated with the rapidly developing iron and steel industries and with railway expansions, and by 1881 was a millionaire and the foremost ironmaster in the States. As he grew older he took as his motto, "The man who dies rich, dies disgraced," and expended his vast fortune in a series of benefactions ; one of which (mindful of the days of his youth) was the establishment of public libraries.]

LOOKING back to-day it seems incredible that only forty years ago (1870) chemistry in the United States was an almost unknown agent in connection with the manufacture of pig iron. It was the agency, above all others, most needful in the manufacture of iron and steel. The blast-furnace manager of that day was usually a rude bully, generally a foreigner, who in addition to his other acquirements was able to knock down a man now and then as a lesson to the other unruly spirits under him. He was supposed to diagnose the condition of the furnace by instinct, to possess some almost supernatural power of divination,

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like his congener in the country districts who was reputed to be able to locate an oil well or water supply by means of a hazel rod. He was a veritable quack doctor who applied whatever remedies occurred to him for the troubles of his patient.

The Lucy Furnace was out of one trouble and into another, owing to the great variety of ores, limestone, and coke which were then supplied with little or no regard to their component parts. This state of affairs became intolerable to us. We finally decided to dispense with the rule-of-thumb-and-intuition manager, and to place a young man in charge of the furnace. We had a young shipping clerk, Henry M. Curry, who had distinguished himself, and it was resolved to make him manager.

Mr. Phipps had the Lucy Furnace under his special charge. His daily visits to it saved us from failure there. Not that the furnace was not doing as well as other furnaces in the West as to money-making, but being so much larger than other furnaces its variations entailed much more serious results. I am afraid my partner had something to answer for in his Sunday morning visits to the Lucy Furnace when his good father and sister left the house for more devotional duties. But even if he had gone with them his real earnest prayer could not but have had reference at times to the precarious condition of the Lucy Furnace then absorbing his thoughts.

The next step taken was to find a chemist as Mr. Curry's assistant and guide. We found the man in a learned German, Dr. Fricke, and great secrets did the doctor open up to us. Iron stone from mines that had a high reputation was now found to contain ten, fifteen, and even twenty

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per cent. less iron than it had been credited with. Mines that hitherto had a poor reputation we found to be now yielding superior ore. The good was bad and the bad was good, and everything was topsy-turvy. Nine-tenths of all the uncertainties of pig-iron making were dispelled under the burning sun of chemical knowledge.

At a most critical period when it was necessary for the credit of the firm that the blast furnace should make its best product, it had been stopped because an exceedingly rich and pure ore had been substituted for an inferior ore—an ore which did not yield more than two-thirds of the quantity of iron of the other. The furnace had met with disaster because too much lime had been used to flux this exceptionally pure ironstone. The very superiority of the materials had involved us in serious losses.

What fools we had been ! But then there was this consolation : we were not as great fools as our competitors. It was years after we had taken chemistry to guide us that it was said by the proprietors of some other furnaces that they could not afford to employ a chemist. Had they known the truth then, they would have known that they could not afford to be without one. Looking back it seems pardonable to record that we were the first to employ a chemist at blast furnaces—something our competitors pronounced extravagant.

The Lucy Furnace became the most profitable branch of our business, because we had almost the entire monopoly of scientific management. Having discovered the secret, it was not long (1872) before we decided to erect an additional

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furnace. This was done with great economy as compared with our first experiment. The mines which had no reputation and the products of which many firms would not permit to be used in their blast furnaces found a purchaser in us. Those mines which were able to obtain an enormous price for their products, owing to a reputation for quality, we quietly ignored. A curious illustration of this was the celebrated Pilot Knob mine in Missouri. Its product was, so to speak, under a cloud. A small portion of it only could be used, it was said, without obstructing the furnace. Chemistry told us that it was low in phosphorus, but very high in silicon. There was no better ore and scarcely any as rich, if it were properly fluxed. We therefore bought heavily of this and received the thanks of the proprietors for rendering their property valuable.

It is hardly believable that for several years we were able to dispose of the highly phosphoric cinder from the puddling furnaces at a higher price than we had to pay for the pure cinder from the heating furnaces of our competitors—a cinder which was richer in iron than the puddled cinder and much freer from phosphorus. Upon some occasion a blast furnace had attempted to smelt the flue cinder, and from its greater purity the furnace did not work well with a mixture intended for an impurer article; hence for years it was thrown over the banks of the river at Pittsburgh by our competitors as worthless. In some cases we were even able to exchange a poor article for a good one and obtain a bonus.

But it is still more unbelievable that a prejudice, equally unfounded, existed against putting into

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the blast furnaces the roll-scale from the mills which was pure oxide of iron. This reminds me of my dear friend and fellow-Dunfermline townsman, Mr. Chisholm, of Cleveland. We had many pranks together. One day, when I was visiting his works at Cleveland, I saw men wheeling this valuable roll-scale into the yard. I asked Mr. Chisholm where they were going with it, and he said :

“ To throw it over the bank. Our managers have always complained that they had bad luck when they attempted to remelt it in the blast furnace.”

I said nothing, but upon my return to Pittsburgh I set about having a joke at his expense. We had then a young man in our service named Du Puy, whose father was known as the inventor of a direct process in iron-making with which he was then experimenting in Pittsburgh. I recommended our people to send Du Puy to Cleveland to contract for all the roll-scale of my friend’s establishment. He did so, buying it for fifty cents per ton and having it shipped to him direct. This continued for some time. I expected always to hear of the joke being discovered. The premature death of Mr. Chisholm occurred before I could apprise him of it. His successors soon, however, followed our example.

I had not failed to notice the growth of the Bessemer process. If this proved successful I knew that iron was destined to give place to steel ; that the iron Age would pass away and the Steel Age take its place. My friend, John A. Wright, president of the Freedom Iron Works at Lewiston, Pennsylvania, had visited England purposely to

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investigate the new process. He was one of our best and most experienced manufacturers, and his decision was so strongly in its favour that he induced his company to erect Bessemer works. He was quite right, but just a little in advance of his time. The capital required was greater than he estimated. More than this, it was not to be expected that a process which was even then in somewhat of an experimental stage in Britain could be transplanted to the new country and operated successfully from the start. The experiment was certain to be long and costly, and for this my friend had not made sufficient allowance.

At a later date, when the process had become established in England, capitalists began to erect the present Pennsylvania Steel Works at Harrisburg. These also had to pass through an experimental stage, and at a critical moment would probably have been wrecked but for the timely assistance of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. It required a broad and able man like President Thomson, of the Pennsylvania Railroad, to recommend to his board of directors that so large a sum as six hundred thousand dollars should be advanced to a manufacturing concern on his road, that steel rails might be secured for the line. The result fully justified his action.

The question of a substitute for iron rails upon the Pennsylvania Railroad and other leading lines had become a very serious one. Upon certain curves at Pittsburgh, on the road connecting the Pennsylvania with the Fort Wayne, I had seen new iron rails placed every six weeks or two months. Before the Bessemer process was known I had called President Thomson's attention to the

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efforts of Mr. Dodds in England, who had carbonized the heads of iron rails with good results. I went to England and obtained control of the Dodds patents and recommended President Thomson to appropriate twenty thousand dollars for experiments at Pittsburgh, which he did. We built a furnace on our grounds at the upper mill and treated several hundred tons of rails for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company and with remarkably good results as compared with iron rails. These were the first hard-headed rails used in America. We placed them on some of the sharpest curves and their superior service far more than compensated for the advance made by Mr. Thomson. Had the Bessemer process not been successfully developed, I verily believe that we should ultimately have been able to improve the Dodds process sufficiently to make its adoption general. But there was nothing to be compared with the solid steel article which the Bessemer process produced.

Our friends of the Cambria Iron Company at Johnstown, near Pittsburgh—the principal manufacturers of rails in America—decided to erect a Bessemer plant. In England I had seen it demonstrated, at least to my satisfaction, that the process could be made a grand success without undue expenditure of capital or great risk. Mr. William Coleman, who was ever alive to new methods, arrived at the same conclusion. It was agreed we should enter upon the manufacture of steel rails at Pittsburgh. He became a partner and also my dear friend Mr. David McCandless, who had so kindly offered aid to my mother at my father's death. The latter was not forgotten.

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Mr. John Scott and Mr. David A. Stewart, and others joined me; Mr. Edgar Thomson and Mr. Thomas A. Scott, president and vice-president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, also became stockholders, anxious to encourage the development of steel. The steel-rail company was organized, January 1, 1873.

The question of location was the first to engage our serious attention. I could not reconcile myself to any location that was proposed, and finally went to Pittsburgh to consult with my partners about it. The subject was constantly in my mind and in bed Sunday morning the site suddenly appeared to me. I rose and called to my brother :

"Tom, you and Mr. Coleman are right about the location; right at Braddock's, between the Pennsylvania, the Baltimore and Ohio, and the river, is the best situation in America; and let's call the works after our dear friend Edgar Thomson. Let us go over to Mr. Coleman's and drive out to Braddock's."

We did so that day, and the next morning Mr. Coleman was at work trying to secure the property. Mr. McKinney, the owner, had a high idea of the value of his farm. What we had expected to purchase for five or six hundred dollars an acre cost us two thousand. But since then we have been compelled to add to our original purchase at a cost of five thousand dollars per acre.

There, on the very field of Braddock's defeat, we began the erection of our steel-rail mills. In excavating for the foundations many relics of the battle were found—bayonets, swords, and the like. It was there that the then provost of Dunfermline, Sir Arthur Halkett, and his son were slain. How

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did they come to be there will very naturally be asked. It must not be forgotten that, in those days, the provosts of the cities of Britain were members of the aristocracy—the great men of the district who condescended to enjoy the honour of the position without performing the duties. No one in trade was considered good enough for the provostship. We have remnants of this aristocratic notion throughout Britain to-day. There is scarcely any life assurance or railway company, or in some cases manufacturing company, but must have at its head, to enjoy the honours of the presidency, some titled person totally ignorant of the duties of the position. So it was that Sir Arthur Halkett, as a gentleman, was Provost of Dunfermline, but by calling he followed the profession of arms and was killed on this spot. It was a coincidence that what had been the field of death to two native-born citizens of Dunfermline should be turned into an industrial hive by two others.

Another curious fact has recently been discovered. Mr. John Morley's address, in 1904 on Founder's Day at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, referred to the capture of Fort Duquesne by General Forbes and his writing Prime Minister Pitt that he had rechristened it "Pittsburgh" for him. This General Forbes was then Laird of Pittencrieff and was born in the Glen which I purchased in 1902 and presented to Dunfermline for a public park. So that two Dunfermline men have been Lairds of Pittencrieff whose chief work was in Pittsburgh. One named Pittsburgh and the other laboured for its development.

In naming the steel mills as we did the desire

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was to honour my friend Edgar Thomson, but when I asked permission to use his name his reply was significant. He said that as far as American steel rails were concerned, he did not feel that he wished to connect his name with them, for they had proved to be far from creditable. Uncertainty was, of course, inseparable from the experimental stage ; but, when I assured him that it was now possible to make steel rails in America as good in every particular as the foreign article, and that we intended to obtain for our rails the reputation enjoyed by the Keystone bridges and the Kloman axles, he consented.

He was very anxious to have us purchase land upon the Pennsylvania Railroad, as his first thought was always for that company. This would have given the Pennsylvania a monopoly of our traffic. When he visited Pittsburgh a few months later and Mr. Robert Pitcairn, my successor as superintendent of the Pittsburgh Division of the Pennsylvania, pointed out to him the situation of the new works at Braddock's Station, which gave us not only a connection with his own line, but also with the rival Baltimore and Ohio line, and with a rival in one respect greater than either—the Ohio River—he said, with a twinkle of his eye to Robert, as Robert told me :

“ Andy should have located his works a few miles farther east.” But Mr. Thomson knew the good and sufficient reasons which determined the selection of the unrivalled site.

*Autobiography.* 1920.

## XXII

J. M. DENT

### Early Struggles

[Mr. J. M. Dent left Darlington at the age of seventeen, to complete his education as a bookbinder in a London workshop. He had a hard struggle to establish himself as a bookbinder, but after he had surmounted his early difficulties by dogged perseverance, he became a publisher, with a special interest in the binding and general appearance of his books, and speedily gained a very high reputation by his artistic productions. His most important publishing venture was probably the well-known *Everyman* series.]

WHEN I had been with Mr. Rutherford for two or three years he failed in business, and I had once more to seek some way of learning my craft. I had a real love for it and had set up a hand-press in my bedroom and did some work for myself and as many odd jobs as I could pick up in the town. But I had no money nor was I competent enough to begin business at this time, so after wasting a year, it was arranged that I should go to London—there my elder brother had preceded me and was at the head of one of the departments at Messrs. Waterlow and Sons, the great printers—there I might finish my apprenticeship.

I remember as if it were yesterday coming up

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to London on the 7th of August 1867, when nearly eighteen years old. At that time there ran what was called a "Parliamentary" train, which meant that railways were compelled to run a train once a day the whole length of the line at a fare of a penny per mile. Before the war the customary rate for all trains in Great Britain had been a penny a mile for many years, but at the time I speak of there was an extra charge for every train but the "Parliamentary." This stopped at all stations from Darlington to London, a distance of about 240 miles, and took from nine o'clock in the morning till seven or eight o'clock at night, and was always crowded.

My dear father had as much as he could do to equip me with a box of clothes and pay my fare, and there was only 2s. 6d. for my pocket, out of which I had to get something to eat on the journey. I remember being sandwiched in between two stout middle-aged ladies and remained so all the way to London. It was an August day, as I have said, and very hot, so I had a sweltering time of it. Now by some mischance they had forgotten to furnish me with my brother's address in writing, thinking that as I had written it many times I could remember it. Alas! Memory played me a scurvy trick; not for the whole world could I remember the number of the house, though the name of the street was familiar, and by mischance my brother, who was to have met me, was detained at the office, and I landed in London remembering only that the name of the street I wanted was Copenhagen Street, and for anything I knew it might be twelve miles away from the station. I had with me a great box and 1s. 6d. left out of my

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half-crown. The porter got me a cab, and as I could not tip him I was blessed accordingly. I gave the cabman the number as nearly as I could remember and he drove me to it, only to find that no such person as H. R. Dent lived there. What was to be done? My 1s. 6d. was given to the cabman and I was left penniless in the street with my box. There was nothing to do but ask the people at whose door I stood to take in my box until I could find my brother, which they very kindly consented to do. Meanwhile there I was in London without the address of any one who could help me. It looked a pretty difficult situation, and remember that then there was no means of finding any address, such as the telephone or directory. Well, I came to the conclusion that the only thing to do was to set off and knock at every door—no small task when there were three hundred or four hundred houses—and that somehow I might chance on the right number. In despair I had just made up my mind to begin at the bottom of the street when I met my brother coming out of the house in great perturbation. Having found I had not arrived, he was hurrying to the station to see what had happened. Well, my misery was soon turned into complete satisfaction when I sat down to a comfortable meal—prepared, by the by, by a little lady who was to become my wife. After that I was plunged into utter amazement and delight by my brother's taking me to see a wonderful fairyland of an exhibition at the Agricultural Hall, which had been prepared in honour of the Sultan of Turkey, who was at that time our "loyal and esteemed ally," on a visit to London.

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The exhibition was continued to please the public for a few nights, and what a marvellous thing it was to me. The enormous hall was lit up with millions of jets ; a large fountain played right in the middle, and coloured lights passed over it changing continually ; massed army bands played Jullien's British Army Quadrilles in very dramatic fashion, and the whole thing made me feel as if I had dropped into a new world, as indeed it was to me this first night in London.

As for my actual work, I first went to a small bookbinder named Hipkins who had his workshop in Bucklersbury, out of Cheapside—the very name of such a street suggested romance, especially to a reader of Sir Walter Scott's novels. My remuneration was to be 12s. 6d. a week as a turnover apprentice, and as my bare lodgings cost me 14s., my brother generously made up the difference, leaving me my overtime pay, such as it was, for clothes and pocket-money. It is worth recording that the hours I worked were from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., with one hour for dinner and half an hour for tea, and quite frequently we worked till 10 p.m., after which I had to walk home to King's Cross. There was no margin for bus fares in those days, and the walk took three-quarters of an hour to an hour, for I was lame and had sore feet. Nothing is more vivid in my life than those tortured walks home after a long day's standing, limping along painfully and through a crowd in utter and complete loneliness. I was provincial and had come from a town where I knew almost every face, many friendly ones, but here I found myself looking continually for a kindly hail and

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met absolute indifference everywhere. I shall never forget the sense of complete forlornness which came over me night after night, and how thankful I was to reach our lodgings where were light and warmth and kindly faces. Alone in London ! there is nothing more awful to a sensitive mind ; you learn once and for all that you are as dust in the balance and of no consequence living or dead.

The years of my life in London from eighteen to twenty-one were uneventful except that I became an engaged man. Working as I did from 8 a.m. to 8 and often till 10 p.m. there was not much time for anything else but sleep, for even on Saturdays we did not leave till four o'clock, and yet somehow I seemed to get to a good many meetings and found time to go courting with a good many girls of my acquaintance. For then, even as now, I had a great weakness for the sex, and in the beginning, as in the end, they never did me anything but good.

My brother and I lodged with a widow whose name was Mrs. Pook and two young ladies named Wiggins who helped her to keep house, or, rather, shall I say, kept house for her, for it would never have held together but for them. Besides my brother and I there were two other lodgers, and the top floor was let to a young couple who were friends of our landlady. The household was a chapel-going one, and we had many things in common, so that we formed almost a family party. The little lady who had waited upon me the first night I arrived soon made me her devoted follower, and before I was twenty-one I became engaged to her. She was some years older than I, but I was

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always older than my years, so that we found no disparity in that respect.

Having finished my apprenticeship, and having the promise of work at twenty-eight shillings a week, and the widow Pook resolving to marry again, the household was broken up. My *fiancée* being without a home and having to work for her living, we made up our minds to marry and work together and have all the fun of building up a home for ourselves. And so we did, without a stick of our own, our only wedding presents being a second-hand feather bed, a pretentious wedding (for which we afterwards found we had to pay), and a wedding breakfast kindly given to us by George Lomax, a famous teetotal lecturer of that day, after which we went quietly off to Limehouse to two furnished rooms let to us by a brother of my wife's who was a dock-master there.

Well, we had a happy hard-working life, saving hard to buy up bits of furniture, for we both hated living in other folks' rooms, and in a very few months we moved into two rooms in Clifton Street, near Finsbury Square, which were our very own and we furnished for cash down. It was a delicious piece of happiness every week almost to go out and cheapen things to add to our household gods. The humiliation I had to bear through my wife frequently earning more money than I did was compensated for by seeing her sheer happiness in spending it.

It was not long before we had taken the full responsibility of a house where we still worked together and even took in lodgers to eke out the rent. Before I was twenty-three our first boy was born, and this instalment of a family coming

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quickly to us, roused me to see that unless I made some great effort, my wife would have to go on toiling all her life to keep the children ; for twenty-eight shillings a week, even in those days, did not go very far, although it was augmented by overtime in the winter. Alas ! we had slack time in summer, and every penny counted.

It happened that a friend of mine, named Nat Brooks, a bookbinder, came to live with us (a far better workman than I), who had begun business but had failed to work it up and had returned to the bench. He had bits of his old plant left, and I bought them for five pounds or so, which he was to take out in payment for lodgings. I burnt my ships and started business as a bookbinder in a workshop in Hoxton that cost me three shillings a week ! My wife had largely to sustain the household for some weeks while I was gathering some work together, but by the help of my brother, who introduced me to Waterlow and Sons, and my good fortune in getting orders from the Civil Service Stores through the help of an errand boy whom I employed, I soon had more than I could do, and had to hire a boy and sometimes a man to help me before the first year was out.

Soon I moved from my three-shillings-a-week shop to one at double the rent in Featherstone Street, nearer the City, and there an idea struck me which, if carried through, would enable me, as it were, to kill two birds with one stone. I had noticed that booksellers had books bound in leather in their windows, and I knew that they bought the books in sheets from the publishers and had them bound by their own bookbinder.

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Now I thought if I could say to the publishers that I would buy their sheets if they would give me some work in contra account, I could then bind the sheets and sell to the bookseller, and so make work in two ways. The idea worked out well as far as giving me plenty of work to do, but the profit was not so obvious, though, of course, I was able to contribute more fully to the household expenses, yet I was not earning a living wage in spite of continuous toil. Still my wife was very proud that by her aid I had established a business, and was most cheerful and faithful in bearing her heavy share of the burden ; but the children were coming, our second son was born before I was twenty-five, and my wife's hands were full, and still my business was not enough to sustain us because I had continually to add to the little plant, and pecuniary pressure became severe.

Yet we were happy and eager, and took risks. We moved into a larger house, 139 East Road, and even had two or three apprentices (the eldest, Harry Benwell, is with me yet) to live with us, with whom we had premiums which helped us for the time being, and in a year or two we required more room. We moved over the way to 124 East Road and built our own workshop over the little gardens at the back of the premises, borrowing the money at ten per cent. interest. We hardly got settled there before what appeared to be a great stroke of luck happened to us. My old employer, Mr. Price, with whom I had served the last year of my apprenticeship, and for whom I had worked as a journeyman, died, and his little business was for sale for the small sum of £250. It seemed a tremendous bargain, for I knew he

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had employed a dozen or more men and many more women, but where was I to get the purchase money ? I was already loaded with the mortgage on my workshop and found it hard to pay the wages every week. But the thing was too good to let pass without an effort, as both my wife and I thought, so we looked about for help. We had a year before taken a dwelling-house in New North Road from George Carter, a grocer in a large way, who had been glad to get rid of his lease, and who had already helped me by loaning me some small capital at a reasonable interest. I determined to lay the matter before him, but though a genial, kindly fellow, he gave me a severe lecture, and said I ought to pay back the old loan before venturing on any new enterprise. However, I persuaded him to go and look at it, and he was so convinced it was a good thing that he lent me the money and I bought it.

And now I thought my fortune made. Alas ! the best-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley. The lease of the premises in which the little business was carried on ran out, and though when I purchased it I was promised a renewal, the landlord repented and refused to renew, therefore as the premises I had built for my own business were too small to contain the two, I had to seek a larger building to enable me to work both under one roof. This meant abandoning the houses on the gardens of which I had built the workshop, fitting up a larger place, and taking the responsibility of the building, 69 Great Eastern Street, at £250 a year. Fortunately I was able to sublet a substantial portion of the premises. Meanwhile, family responsibility was still growing ; I had

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three children living and had lost one. I tried hard to do without borrowing any more money, but alas ! I was compelled to seek it wherever it could be got, and my kind friend Mr. Carter helped me until I felt utterly ashamed to ask him further. Moreover, what with interest, the loss of rent on my old premises, and the unremunerative character of the work, I found myself getting deeper and deeper into debt, with hardly any hope of paying off the principal, while the task of providing wages each week became a torture and a humiliation the recollection of which makes me shudder even now. Many a Friday night came without knowing from whence the wages were to come for the morrow, and all through the week terror was upon me as to how they were to be met.

Mr. Lardner, a tailor, from whom I had taken the lease of the ground on which I had built my workshop at 124 East Road, took great interest in what I was doing and became a most helpful and sympathetic friend. I can hardly tell how much I owed to him in those awful days. Many a time did he help me through the terrible weekends. He was not a moneyed man himself, but got his friends to help, and I was often borrowing money on Saturday to be paid back on Monday, so that the agony frequently began again by the beginning of the week and lasted all through. I dream of those days now sometimes, and would not endure them again for a wilderness of fortunes.

It has its humorous side sometimes, and the way of getting over difficulties may be illustrated by the fact that one day I was so closely run for money that I went and asked my friend for the loan of half a crown, and he had not half a crown

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to spare, but asked what my difficulty was, and I said, "We have no butter in the house, and want some for breakfast." "Oh, well," he said, "there are more ways of getting over that difficulty than one." He had a neighbour who kept a chandler's shop, and immediately went there, got the butter on credit, and we were satisfied.

*The Memoirs of J. M. Dent.* 1928.

## XXIII

### W. H. HUDSON

#### My First Visit to Buenos Ayres

[W. H. Hudson is one of the most delightful of all nature writers, though, like other writers of this kind, he has never had so large a number of readers as he has deserved. He was born near Buenos Ayres, but came to this country in 1894, and remained here until his death in 1922. His health was far from good, and his means were never sufficiently good to enable him to take life easily until quite near its end. His powers of observation of wild nature, and especially of birds, were wonderful; his power of recording his observations for the benefit of readers was equally great.]

THE happiest time of my boyhood was at that early period, a little past the age of six, when I had my own pony to ride on, and was allowed to stay on his back just as long and go as far from home as I liked. I was like the young bird when on first quitting the nest it suddenly becomes conscious of its power to fly. My early flying days were, however, soon interrupted, when my mother took me on my first visit to Buenos Ayres; that is to say, the first I remember, as I must have been taken there once before as an infant in arms, since we lived too far from town for any missionary-clergyman to travel all that distance just to baptize a little baby. Buenos Ayres is now the

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wealthiest, most populous, Europeanized city in South America : what it was like at that time these glimpses into a far past will serve to show. Coming as a small boy of an exceptionally impressionable mind, from that green plain where people lived the simple pastoral life, everything I saw in the city impressed me deeply, and the sights which impressed me the most are as vivid in my mind to-day as they ever were. I was a solitary little boy in my rambles about the streets, for though I had a younger brother who was my only playmate, he was not yet five, and too small to keep me company in my walks. Nor did I mind having no one with me. Very, very early in my boyhood I had acquired the habit of going about alone to amuse myself in my own way, and it was only after years, when my age was about twelve, that my mother told me how anxious this singularity in me used to make her. She would miss me when looking out to see what the children were doing, and I would be called and searched for, to be found hidden away somewhere in the plantation. Then she began to keep an eye on me, and when I was observed stealing off she would secretly follow and watch me, standing motionless among the tall weeds or under the trees by the half-hour, staring at vacancy. This distressed her very much ; then to her great relief and joy she discovered that I was there with a motive which she could understand and appreciate : that I was watching some living thing, an insect perhaps, but oftener a bird—a pair of little scarlet flycatchers building a nest of lichen on a peach tree, or some other beautiful thing. And as she loved all living things herself she was quite satisfied that I was

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not going queer in my head, for that was what she had been fearing.

The strangeness of the streets was a little too much for me at the start, and I remember that on first venturing out by myself a little distance from home I got lost. In despair of ever finding my way back I began to cry, hiding my face against a post at a street corner, and was there soon surrounded by quite a number of passers-by ; then a policeman came up, with brass buttons on his blue coat and a sword at his side, and taking me by the arm he asked me in a commanding voice where I lived—the name of the street, and the number of the house. I couldn't tell him ; then I began to get frightened on account of his sword and big black moustache and loud rasping voice, and suddenly ran away, and after running for about six or eight minutes found myself back at home, to my surprise and joy.

The house where we stayed with English friends was near the front, or what was then the front, that part of the city which faced the Plata River, a river which was like the sea, with no visible shore beyond ; and like the sea it was tidal, and differed only in its colour, which was a muddy red instead of blue or green. The house was roomy, and like most of the houses at that date had a large courtyard paved with red tiles and planted with small lemon trees and flowering shrubs of various kinds. The streets were straight and narrow, paved with round boulder stones the size of a football, the pavements with brick or flagstones, and so narrow they would hardly admit of more than two persons walking abreast. Along the pavements on each side of the street were rows

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of posts placed at a distance of ten yards apart. These strange-looking rows of posts, which foreigners laughed to see, were no doubt the remains of yet ruder times, when ropes of hide were stretched along the side of the pavements to protect the foot-passengers from runaway horses, wild cattle driven by wild men from the plains, and other dangers of the narrow streets. As they were then paved the streets must have been the noisiest in the world, on account of the immense numbers of big springless carts in them. Imagine the thunderous racket made by a long procession of these carts, when they were returning empty, and the drivers, as was often the case, urged their horses to a gallop, and they bumped and thundered over the big round stones !

Just opposite the house we stayed at there was a large church, one of the largest of the numerous churches of the city, and one of my most vivid memories relates to a great annual festival at the church—that of the patron saint's day. It had been open to worshippers all day, but the chief service was held about three o'clock in the afternoon ; at all events it was at that hour when a great attendance of fashionable people took place. I watched them as they came in couples, families, and small groups, in every case the ladies, beautifully dressed, attended by their cavaliers. At the door the gentleman would make his bow and withdraw to the street before the building, where a sort of outdoor gathering was formed of all those who had come as escorts to the ladies, and where they would remain until the service was over. The crowd in the street grew and grew until there were about four or five hundred gentlemen,

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mostly young, in the gathering, all standing in small groups, conversing in an animated way, so that the street was filled with the loud humming sound of their blended voices. These men were all natives, all of the good or upper class of the native society, and all dressed exactly alike in the fashion of that time. It was their dress and the uniform appearance of so large a number of persons, most of them with young, handsome, animated faces, that fascinated me and kept me on the spot gazing at them until the big bells began to thunder at the conclusion of the service and the immense concourse of gaily-dressed ladies swarmed out, and immediately the meeting broke up, the gentlemen hurrying back to meet them.

They all wore silk hats and the glossiest black broadcloth, not even a pair of trousers of any other shade was seen ; and all wore the scarlet silk or fine cloth waistcoat which, at that period, was considered the right thing for every citizen of the republic to wear ; also, in lieu of buttonhole, a scarlet ribbon pinned to the lapel of the coat. It was a pretty sight, and the concourse reminded me of a flock of military starlings, a black or dark-plumaged bird with a scarlet breast, one of my feathered favourites.

My rambles were almost always on the front, since I could walk there a mile or two from home, north or south, without getting lost, always with the vast expanse of water on one hand, with many big ships looking dim in the distance, and numerous lighters or berlanders coming from them with cargoes or merchandise which they unloaded into carts, these going out a quarter of a mile in the shallow water to meet them. Then there were the

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water-carts going and coming in scores and hundreds, for at that period there was no water supply to the houses, and every householder had to buy muddy water by the bucket at his own door from the watermen.

One of the most attractive spots to me was the congregating place of the *lavanderas*, south of my street. Here on the broad beach under the cliff one saw a whiteness like a white cloud, covering the ground for a space of about a third of a mile ; and the cloud, as one drew near, resolved itself into innumerable garments, sheets, and quilts, and other linen pieces, fluttering from long lines, and covering the low rocks washed clean by the tide and the stretches of green turf between. It was the spot where the washerwomen were allowed to wash all the dirty linen of Buenos Ayres in public. All over the ground the women, mostly negresses, were seen on their knees, beside the pools among the rocks, furiously scrubbing and pounding away at their work, and like all negresses they were exceedingly vociferous, and their loud gabble, mingled with yells and shrieks of laughter, reminded me of the hubbub made by a great concourse of gulls, ibises, godwits, geese, and other noisy water-fowl on some marshy lake. It was a wonderfully animated scene, and drew me to it again and again : I found, however, that it was necessary to go warily among these women, as they looked with suspicion at idling boys, and sometimes, when I picked my way among the spread garments, I was sharply ordered off. Then, too, they often quarrelled over their right to certain places and spaces among themselves ; then very suddenly their hilarious gabble would

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change to wild cries of anger and torrents of abuse. By-and-by I discovered that their greatest rages and worst language were when certain young gentlemen of the upper classes visited the spot to amuse themselves by baiting the *lavanderas*. The young gentleman would saunter about in an absent-minded manner and presently walk right on to a beautifully embroidered and belaced nightdress or other dainty garment spread out to dry on the sward or rock, and, standing on it, calmly proceed to take out and light a cigarette. Instantly the black virago would be on her feet confronting him and pouring out a torrent of her foulest expressions and deadliest curses. He, in a pretended rage, would reply in even worse language. That would put her on her mettle ; for now all her friends and foes scattered about the ground would suspend their work to listen with all their ears ; and the contest of words growing louder and fiercer would last until the combatants were both exhausted and unable to invent any more new and horrible expressions of opprobrium to hurl at each other. Then the insulted young gentleman would kick the garment away in a fury and hurling the unfinished cigarette in his adversary's face would walk off with his nose in the air.

I laugh to recall these unseemly word-battles on the beach, but they were shocking to me when I first heard them as a small, innocent-minded boy, and it only made the case worse when I was assured that the young gentleman was only acting a part, that the extreme anger he exhibited, which might have served as an excuse for using such language, was all pretence.

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Another favourite pastime of these same idle, rich young gentlemen offended me as much as the one I have related. The night-watchmen, called *serenos*, of that time interested me in an extraordinary way. When night came it appeared that the fierce policemen, with their swords and brass buttons, were no longer needed to safeguard the people, and their place in the streets was taken by a quaint, frowsy-looking body of men, mostly old, some almost decrepit, wearing big cloaks and carrying staffs and heavy iron lanterns with a tallow candle alight inside. But what a pleasure it was to lie awake at night and listen to their voices calling the hours ! The calls began at the stroke of eleven, and then from beneath the window would come the wonderful long drawing call of *Las ón—ce han dà—do y se—ré—no*, which means eleven of the clock and all serene, but if clouded the concluding word would be *nu—blà—do*, and so on, according to the weather. From all the streets, from all over the town, the long-drawn calls would float to my listening ears, with infinite variety in the voices—the high and shrill, the falsetto, the harsh, raucous note like the caw of the carrion-crow, the solemn, booming bass, and then some fine, rich, pure voice that soared heavenwards above all the others and was like the pealing notes of an organ.

I loved the poor night-watchmen and their cries, and it grieved my little soft heart to hear that it was considered fine sport by the rich young gentlemen to sally forth at night and do battle with them, and to deprive them of their staffs and lanterns, which they took home and kept as trophies.

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Another human phenomenon which annoyed and shocked my tender mind, like that of the contests on the beach between young gentlemen and washerwomen, was the multitude of beggars which infested the town. These were not like our dignified beggar on horseback, with his red poncho, spurs, and tall straw hat, who rode to your gate, and having received his tribute, blessed you and rode away to the next estancia. These city beggars on the pavement were the most brutal, even fiendish, looking men I had ever seen. Most of them were old soldiers, who, having served their ten, fifteen, or twenty years, according to the nature of the crime for which they had been condemned to the army, had been discharged or thrown out to live like carrion-hawks on what they could pick up. Twenty times a day at least you would hear the iron gate opening from the courtyard into the street swung open, followed by the call or shout of the beggar demanding charity in the name of God. Outside you could not walk far without being confronted by one of these men, who would boldly square himself in front of you on the narrow pavement and beg for alms. If you had no change and said, "*Perdon, por Dios,*" he would scowl and let you pass ; but if you looked annoyed or disgusted, or ordered him out of the way, or pushed by without a word, he would glare at you with a concentrated rage which seemed to say, "Oh, to have you down at my mercy, bound hand and foot, a sharp knife in my hand !" And this would be followed by a blast of the most horrible language.

*Far Away and Long Ago.* 1931.

## XXIV

T. P. O'CONNOR

### Mainly about Journalism

[Mr. T. P. O'Connor was one of the most prominent of the Irish Nationalists who fought for Home Rule under the leadership of Parnell. He was also an extremely able journalist, and launched several papers, which proved to be brilliant successes. The memorial to his memory in Fleet Street says: "His pen could lay bare the Bones of a book or the Soul of a statesman in a few vivid lines."]

HERE I must pause for a moment to describe an important interlude in my own life which had its influence on the Home Rule struggle. The cause of Home Rule was without any advocate in the evening press of London ; I conceived the idea, half in hope, half in terror, that I might start a journal myself in favour of the views of myself and my friends.\* I went around rather shame-facedly among my friends to ask them for the capital, which I placed at £40,000. There was an interesting episode. Two of the richest members of the Liberal Party were brought together by me—they seemed to me to look at each other like two goats preparing for a fight ; when one expressed his readiness to subscribe £10,000, the other answered immediately that he would con-

\* *The London Star.*

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tribute the same; £20,000—half my capital! My joy may be imagined. As a matter of fact, one of them entirely changed his mind and never subscribed a penny; the other, after long negotiation, agreed to subscribe £5,000—half the amount he had originally promised. But I got the £40,000; and, much to my subsequent undoing, I got £2,000, for the promise of a seat on the board, from a very cantankerous Scotsman, who afterwards contributed to my undoing.

I was as innocent as a babe at the time of all things connected with finance or with companies; I didn't realize the importance of getting together a board that might be relied upon to deal in a friendly spirit with me. One member I insisted on putting on out of my warm personal affection and admiration for his great public spirit; he contributed even more than the other to my undoing. I did not realize that he had vast ambitions of his own, and that a great London paper could greatly help him in realizing these ambitions; nor how these ambitions could react on his attitude to me.

Then, as now, I was an extreme Radical, and I devoted my pen and the new paper which I had brought into being almost as much to the British Radical as to the Irish Cause. I wrote my first article in a white heat; it is, I believe, one of the best articles I have ever written. I will quote from it only a few sentences—which I may say have passed into history, and have been frequently reproduced. This is the passage:

“ The charwoman that lives in St. Giles, the seamstress that is sweated in Whitechapel, the

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labourer that stands begging for work outside the dockyard gate in St. George's-in-the-East—these are the persons by whose condition we shall judge the policy of the different political parties, and as it relieves or injures or leaves unhelped their position, shall that policy by us be praised or condemned, helped or resisted."

In addition to my many other disqualifications, and though I had already been nearly a quarter of a century in journalism and had done all kinds of work, from the description of executions to the manufacture of articles on old prize fights, my experience in many respects was rather too narrow. I remember with what surprise I heard from Edmund Dwyer Grey, for many years proprietor and in control of the then great Irish paper, the *Freeman's Journal*, that sport would be necessarily one of the most important features of the paper. The tip was useful. I was lucky enough to get hold of a gentleman who was then working on another paper, and who had immense reputation as a sporting tipster—he wrote under the *nom de guerre* of "Captain Coe." Though he is dead, the name still survives. In fact, I had become so absorbed in politics that politics alone made a direct appeal to me. . . .

I made an excellent choice of an assistant editor in the late Mr. H. W. Massingham, who was then in the obscurity of a syndicate agency of small importance ; and for the first time his brilliant pen got a real scope. He used to talk with rapture of a gentleman whose name neither I nor, indeed, anybody else had ever heard before ; his name was George Bernard Shaw ; he was appointed as one

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of the assistant leader-writers. Mr. A. B. Walkley and Mr. Clement Shorter were also unknown to me at the time. They were both then Civil Servants —Mr. Walkley in the Post Office, Mr. Shorter in Somerset House.

Another of my young recruits who has got to real journalistic distinction was Robert Donald, then a young Scotsman recently arrived in London. In the clerical department was the gentleman now known as Sir George Sutton, and one of the very rich members of the profession. I was recommended by Sir John Robinson, of the *Daily News*, to a young man named Ernest Parke, then working in the office of a City newspaper. It was almost the best choice in my staff.

Ernest Parke was then a young, flossy-haired man, with a keen face, a lithe and agile body, a tremendous flair for news, and capable of twenty-four hours' work, if necessary, in a single day. He was, as he is, a singular mixture of shrewdness and ideals ; an intense Radical, and at the same time a thoroughly practical journalist. He might be trusted to work up any sensational news of the day, and he helped, with "Jack the Ripper," to make gigantic circulations hitherto unparalleled in evening journalism.

One instance of his extraordinary shrewdness I must recall. In the search for "Jack the Ripper" there came into prominence a man of the East End who was universally known as "Leather Apron," and there were allusions to him in the *Star* which almost pointed to him as the assassin. The poor man was quite innocent, and we had given him an opportunity of an action with thumping damages. Parke parried this blow

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by inviting "Leather Apron" to come and see him at the office. "Leather Apron" made a demand for a hundred pounds for his assent to abandon all legal proceedings. Parke insisted on fifty pounds. When the man still dissented, Parke made the counter-proposition that he would tell "Leather Apron" where to get another fifty pounds which would make up the hundred pounds he claimed. "Leather Apron" assented; and Parke then revealed to him the fact that another paper had made insinuations against him as direct as those of the *Star*, and that he certainly could get fifty pounds from them. The bargain was made, and by this bit of information and by our gift of fifty pounds we were kept out of an action which might have cost us thousands of pounds.

Now, in old age, and in somewhat imperfect health, I look back on myself as I was at this period of my life as on an entirely different person. I was just about forty years of age; I had been a Member of Parliament for eight years. For the first six of these years whenever Parliament was sitting my hours were from one o'clock, when I went down to lunch, usually with Parnell, till something like four o'clock in the morning; and again back at the House of Commons at one o'clock, and again usually up until four o'clock.

The Obstruction period was not yet over, though it was less intense in 1888; but it was a common if not a usual thing for me to be in the House of Commons till two or three o'clock in the morning. I had to have my leading article, which I usually wrote, ready by about nine in the morning, which meant that I had to rise after

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only a few hours' sleep ; and within half an hour or so of my rising to be hammering away at my type-writer with one and often two articles for the paper, and to have them revised and ready by ten o'clock, at which hour our first edition appeared.

I may here reveal a little secret of the prison-house of journalism. In evening papers then, as I believe now, we had no first edition ; the second was the title we gave to the first edition we published.

Conscious of the difficulties which these hours imposed upon me, I resolved, like the merchants of old London, to live in my place of business. I had a rather pretty flat fitted up at the top of the building, and there I slept. I did not realize at the time that fire would have consumed myself and all my belongings in a few minutes. We tested a sort of canvas chute by which people were then being taught how to escape from fire—I never ventured to try the chute myself ; one person who did was rewarded by a broken ankle which took some days to heal.

I paid attention to every detail of the new paper. The figure which stands at the head of the paper even to this day was first presented to me by the artist as a female. I thought that rather reflected on the virility of the paper, and I changed the female figure to the figure of the male warrior—which still exists. I resolved to add to the then usual features of papers a dash of personality ; and so created the column which still is published with the title I devised—“ Mainly About People.” I would have nothing to do with the stodgy seriousness of previous journals, and in that way, perhaps, I may claim to have created a little of

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the modern personal tone which distinguishes the journals of to-day from those of yesterday. I always strove to make the headlines picturesque.

Some of my staff were even more daring than I. In the first London County Council Election, the Progressives (led by the *Star*) won a sweeping victory, and we announced the glad tidings under the heading "Ta-Ra-Ra-Boom-De-Ay"—after the music-hall song then the rage of London.

An even greater triumph was that of "Captain Coe." It will be recalled that one of the ways in which Richard Pigott was caught out by Sir Charles Russell in the tragic cross-examination was his mistake in spelling the word "hesitancy" with an "e" instead of an "a." The day Pigott disappeared "Captain Coe" suggested, and we accepted, the startling headline "The Man who Hesitates is Lost."

Somewhat to my surprise, my City article was one of the most popular features of the paper. It was written by an able and somewhat cynical financial writer who knew all the dark passages in the life of the City—Mr. George Wedlake, whom I have already mentioned, and who had a genius for analysing prospectuses. This was not so important during the first year of the paper, but in the second there was a regular burst of company advertisements, and Wedlake was able to analyse severely and successfully any such company, with the result that his comments were regarded as possibly disastrous to some of these new undertakings. Columns of advertising of these companies—the most high-priced form of advertisement—poured into the office and filled its coffers.

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